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HAIGAZIAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

THE RELEVANCE OF INTERCULTURAL STUDIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Proceedings of the Symposium
Held at Haigazian University
on January 25, 2019

Edited by Arda Ekmekji

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FOREWORD

Arda A. Ekmekji

Since the dawn of classical antiquity, culture has been considered the prerogative of the educated classes and especially of the liberalis, i.e. "the free thinking human being". In the Middle Ages and with the emergence of Da Vinci's Renaissance Man, equal balance between the Arts and the Sciences became the mark of the true intellectual citizen.

The 20th century witnessed universities like Yale and Smith developing a Liberal Arts Educational Model based on a special curriculum designed for higher education. Some universities in Lebanon, like Haigazian University, the American University of Beirut, and the Lebanese American University, followed suit and adopted these Core General Education Courses, requiring them from all students, regardless of their majors or disciplines.

Accordingly, since the 1960's, a series of Intercultural Studies courses have been developed to include the most seminal readings, spanning the period from the 3rd millennium BC to the 3rd millennium AD.

With the rise of technology, smart phones, and Google, accompanied by the near absence of focused reading by students, many faculties and students started contesting these courses and a campaign was launched to totally eliminate or reduce them, with the rationale that they have become 'obsolete' and room must be made for more relevant courses catering to market needs.

For directors, coordinators and instructors of these core education cultural courses, the battle has been continuous with the constant need to remind administrators of the quintessential role of such programs in the making of educated/cultured men and women.

In line with these on-going initiatives, the one-day symposium on *The Relevance of Intercultural Studies in the 21st Century* was organized by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Haigazian University, in order to provide a liberal inter-university platform for debate, deliberation and improvement of these intercultural studies courses at the university level. This publication is a summary of the proceedings of that Symposium.

OPENING REMARKS

Rev. Dr. Paul Haidostian

I welcome you to this day of reflection and discussion about what we consider a defining element of 'our' style of education.

If I go back some thirty-five years to my time as a student in this, the Mehagian Building of HU, and in particular, the impact of the four Intercultural Studies courses I took as a student. They created in me a rich interest regarding the depth, width and corners of human thought, belief and being.

If there were two conclusions I carried over to my graduate studies in theology and psychology, they were the fact that no culture or cultural element is self-made, isolated, or not impacted by surrounding or ensuing factors. Moreover, what I learnt then was the fact that culture, if to be considered good in some sense, should be a genuinely internalized matter, and not simply some social and material manifestations of isolated aspects of civilized life.

What defined the 'intercultural' for me was not only the selections of diverse texts, but also the discussions among the students, who themselves represented cultural identities of various ethnic, national, and religious types.

To list some introductory headlines, therefore, about what I later found to be most important for me in my understanding of culture:

Culture would exhibit a great degree of refinement, or fine-tuning, something that passes the tests of time and space.

Culture would mean a quality of goodness. One cannot pride oneself on aspects of shared identity where aggression, selfishness, blocked relationships are the norms in contrast, one always is to pride oneself on the elements of giving, creating, beauty, and the like. "This is who I am" is not sufficient in cultural expression. In contrast, the best aspects of being should be the focus of human existence.

Culture would mean appreciation of life and sets of coherent values of life. Therefore, the notion of spirit I consider focally

important in any discussion of culture and its study. If the center of humans is spirituality, then at some level the cultural presentation of spirit is to be cherished. This is why religion, organized religion, or varieties of religious experience (William James) have to bring their lessons to us in all our days. Obviously, culture would mean shared traditions that make sense more than one day. 'Intercultural' means that a culture makes more sense when it comes in contact with or in comparison with others around it or even distant from it.

I wish you a great day of thoughtful discussions and evaluations.

REFLECTIONS AND WELCOMING WORDS

Arda A. Ekmekji,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Intercultural Studies Program at Haigazian University, I would like to welcome you all and thank you for speaking, participating, organizing and sharing in today's Symposium. Like most universities based on the American Liberal Arts model, Haigazian University has for the past five decades been engaged in these core education cultural courses, known as General Education, Cultural Studies, Intercultural Studies or Civilizations Sequence Program.

Over the years, in spite of some minor changes at certain times or major convulsions at others, the curricula of these courses have remained quite uniform. For instance during the "war years', reading the sacred texts was considered by some programs as threatening, and they were therefore removed; at other times, instructors complained that these courses reflected western civilization, and thus more Arab or Far-Eastern authors were added. At some point, female directors described the courses as too "male oriented" and hence a gender balance was added. In fact, these courses were variations on the same theme and easily transferable from one university to the other. Our last reading in our last course, entitled *What Makes a Leader,* is on Emotional Intelligence. Students today ask- Emotional Intelligence? And what about AI artificial intelligence? When will you include something about that?

The purpose of today's Symposium is to collectively reflect on the merit of such courses, their components, the teaching methodology and especially the choice of texts to be read. Since these courses are usually required and all students have to take all, most or some of them, it creates a large base for discussion and intercultural exchange. The catalogue of Haigazian University states the purpose of these courses is to create empathy and understanding towards other cultures and value systems. Are we succeeding in doing that?

The Program today is divided into three parts: the past, the present and the future.

In the first part we have our keynote speaker, Prof. Peter Shebaya, the current director of the Civilization Sequence Program (CVSP) and one of its architects since its inception some 50 years ago. He will talk to us about his personal experience, a trip down memory lane.

Following our coffee break, we will focus on the present, the actual status of Intercultural Studies in Lebanon, by three colleagues Drs. Aghacy, Abouchedid and El Halabi from LA, ND and Balamand universities respectively. They will share with us their experiences as Deans of Humanities and Professors engaged in the instruction of Intercultural Studies. I would like to thank them in advance for their participation, as well as their moderator Dr. Oussama Arabi.

The afternoon session focuses on the future and is more of a workshop organized by the Haigazian University Intercultural Studies faculty: Drs. Traboulsi, Agha, Suidan and moderated by Ms. Anita Moutchoyan. We also have a student participant. Why a student? Well, in every exit survey students say, "Why do we have to take these courses that have nothing to do with our majors," and in every alumni meeting, former students come and say, "These were the best courses and the only ones we remember." So what happens between now and later? Let us hear what students also have to say.

One of my former mentors, Prof. Hugh Harcourt, used to say, "What we do in these courses is 'plant bombs' that we don't know when they will explode". Since this term can no more be used metaphorically nowadays, I would rather opt for "*what we do in these courses is plant seeds; we do not know when they will germinate and bloom"*. In a recent leadership program in the USA,[1] 80% of the list of readings required by the participants matched identically the texts we expose our students to.

So are we still relevant?

[1] Aspen Global Leadership Network.

THE RELEVANCE OF INTERCULTURAL STUDIES

Peter Shebaya

First of all, I am looking to see if there are any 'would-be' dinosaurs around. I clearly am the only surviving one, and do you know why they all went extinct? Because they are dreamers like me. I dream of the multiplication of Liberal Arts Colleges in the Middle East, and the starting of course in universities here in Lebanon. This is our greatest challenge today. We try to do something towards that goal, but we do not really have the backing nor the time for that. All the wonderful things happening in the world are driven primarily by a merciless economic thrust. Resources are not available. What is a university? A university is a place where people can come together and reflect on the *quality* of the Humanities aspect with the faculty and students, to reflect on what makes us human. How do we do it as "intellectuals" given the luxury and mandate, for thinking on behalf (but for the benefit) of others? How do we do it?

My first encounter with the 'humanities' and intercultural studies in university life was with Jawaharlal Nehru[2] in 1960, when he visited AUB. As a freshman then, I listened to a very simple speech about *the ends and the means*, about the ubiquitous interplay between might and right, truth and power; not Machiavelli's *ends justifying the means* (which he saw as an unavoidable practical solution to the chaos in Italy at his time), but rather the more structural question of *what kind of magic are you going to use to reach your projected end?* His point was that the means *condition and produce* the ends. For me, this was

[2] Prime minister of India in 1960.

alerting me to the need to be more critical of mantras of the 'the end justifies the means' variety, one which was popular at the time in both Capitalism and Marxism.

As a student I was interested in knowing the people who were behind the dreams they were giving us, to try to match the human being with what was behind what they were saying, i.e. looking behind the scene. This helped me to understand what the 'humanities' ultimately are all about; and academically, this can only be done primarily through intercultural studies courses and Liberal Arts institutions. Imagine my delight upon discovering that Goethe, Hegel, and Nietzsche agreed with me: an Author's Life is an indispensable ingredient in a fuller understanding of their Text.

We are constantly frustrated by the limited time available to do that - originally only four semesters and now reduced to much less. At AUB, only FAS students are **required** to take two of our CVSP courses rather than the previous four. The other two have been replaced by a very wide pool of humanities courses from across the university. Other faculties mostly require no CVSP courses specifically, only four humanities courses. This provides more choice but at the loss of the benefits of a *program*.

On another track, during the "Lebanese war," I taught at OCP,[3] and I was preconditioned to think that these were a different human species; however, I was surprised to realize that people over there are - as Tayeb Saleh said - like people over here. This was a lesson in **empathy**, a vital ingredient in the current mantra of '**critical thinking.'** One may not go amiss in claiming it to be the oft-neglected spirit and ethos of such programs.

How do you package it and present it to students? Previously at AUB, all students had to take a two-year Program which formed a "vertebral column" to help students get a focus on how to proceed. By encountering 'humanity' throughout the ages, in coming to respect a Gilgamesh, an Odysseus, an Oedipus, or an Abraham - in their own contexts - one develops empathy towards

[3] AUB Off Campus Branch during the 'war years' (1975-1992).

these models, a salient feature of a truly authentic engagement in intercultural life.

Empathy is to put oneself into other peoples' shoes, trying to 'see' from their own perspective, and not judging them from ours, 'existential' thinking versus speculative, theoretical thinking. This is the knowledge gained, the wisdom needed to navigate through life. Gilgamesh, with Enkidu's death and his dream of the afterlife, meets death in its full horror versus having an abstract view of it. Does he resign himself? That would be the worst model for humankind. He rejects and refuses to accept this by checking for himself why he couldn't be immortal, since one man has achieved it. [A proto-scientific spirit, not vain and foolish arrogance; making the experiment, not passive acceptance of an apparently monstrous irrational dogma.] When he meets Utnapishtim, he is faced with disappointment and ends with bitter resignation. This is what human tragedy is all about. His proactive spirit produces much benefit for Uruk and reveals his human dignity. His 'defeat' is **trumped** by his authentic human spirit. Similarly Sophocles' Oedipus can be seen as a model for humanity within that 'tragic' context. Otherwise we might indulge in self-congratulatory 'criticism' of his 'pride'- and miss the deep humility of his authentic democratic spirit. That has him accepting to bow to the Chorus' will despite his conviction that this can lead to his death.

When reading these texts, you do not have to 'agree' with their perspectives; instead one can exercise in an empathetic dialogue with these cultures. Our role is to assist students in getting over the barriers of time and space. These cultures have passed the test of time. This is the *sine qua non* of dialogue, the essential condition of having dialogues, not monologues, when the two parties try to put themselves in each other's places.

The books that we read today have weathered the tests of time, space and cultures. They have influenced the whole of the global world today. We are not focusing on western or eastern cultural texts; we are focusing on human beings. These are classics that have survived. If in these courses we can nourish this concern for empathy, in addition to acquiring the information with some

depth, then the students will be better equipped to encounter other cultures. We help them in the scholarly and humane navigation of this journey. This is the "humanities" basis for these courses, the rest are fleshing this out. So let us not get lost in the trees and forget the forest.

Descartes said when you read a book from the past, it is like having an interview with the author. What would you do if you were in the place of Oedipus who trusted his Apollo? That is a challenge that Sophocles provides. Oedipus refused rationally to accept Apollo's oracle as did Gilgamesh in refusing to accept death - Reason facing a seemingly irrational Cosmos. He kills the Sphinx; he is super intelligent, does everything for the Polis, does everything that he considers to be right. His advice is to never give up, not to be passive. He is very intelligent but does not recognize the limits of his Reason. He does everything that is best for the city, the polis; but this is not an illusory split between altruism and egotism. It's the whole package together. Altruism and egotism are worked out together. No one is an island unto himself; he asserts that he is working for both. He gets no ordinary 'reward' but the intrinsic reward of dignity and serving humanity.

Neither Gilgamesh nor Oedipus had any reason to trust their gods, whereas with Abraham it is a different experience. Students tell me they are being taught that the God of Monotheism is immoral because he is asking Abraham to kill his son. However, this should be understood within its own context. He is in a polytheistic culture and therefore is introduced to this divinity who is asking for a sign of the loyalty of his follower, as is the custom for these divinities. Abraham would have to sacrifice his child to his "boss". He passes the test; he is ready to do, out of his experiential knowledge of an eminently good divinity, what in his culture is expected towards far less benevolent powers. He becomes the model of Faith, a serious, mature and engaged faith that expresses itself in a reciprocal love. No lack of serious reasoning here! The message conveyed of course is that **this divinity** does not tolerate human sacrifice, since all are His children (as the prophets make clear). Rather He is engaged in a

relationship of mutual trust and loyalty, a matter of mind and heart.

This is an ongoing problem: not comprehending another perspective but imposing one's own as somehow absolute. Empathy closes the time gap and helps students better to understand the message of the text. Sophocles' final conclusion to "Call no man happy until he dies" is the heart of his tragic message; focusing on Oedipus' "pride" misses the point of the inscrutable tragic cosmic factor, and his admirable attempt to do his best for "humanity" at the cost of his own welfare and life.

Liberal Arts, Humanities, and Cultural Studies courses can help open up the minds of students to understand and grow in their own humanity. It trains them for the 'dance' of civilizations rather than the ubiquitous 'clash' of civilizations, in Prof. Tarif Khalidy's eloquent terms.

Thank you all and pardon the informal delivery and content.

THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE LIBERAL ARTS PROGRAM AT THE LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Samira Aghacy

L. to R. Drs. Elias Halabi, Samira Aghacy, Ousama Arabi (moderator), Kamal Abouchedid

A liberal arts institution is a college or university that aims at imparting general knowledge and developing intellectual capacities, such as the ability to learn and synthesize new ideas, and communicate and think critically. However this kind of education is facing challenges: (1) decreasing interest in liberal arts in the face of increasing demand for vocational and professional education, and (2) decreasing enrollment in majors such as English, History, Philosophy which have few to virtually no students, in a culture that devalues the humanities and privileges professional education.

In difficult economic times, the liberal arts can no longer be afforded, and the focus is on disciplines like science, technology, engineering, business and other fields that produce financial success. In an age of such speed in technological advances, I am going to focus on the Lebanese American University's attempt to keep up with the changing needs of modern society, although we are aware of the many hurdles that can disrupt our work. In order to stay current, LAU has updated its educational strategies by

adding programs in the professional fields without losing track of the need to consolidate the Humanities in the face of change. One major concern is how to market ourselves and remain competitive, and how to integrate vocationalism into the curriculum while maintaining a liberal arts orientation. How do we defend liberal education against the skeptics, parents, students, employers who believe that the material taught in these programs is slight and ineffectual, and that a specialized education appears to be the answer to steady employment? Vocationalism has become the dominant way of thinking, leading to the devaluation and decline of liberal education.

While retaining its sense of mission and accumulated experience from the past, LAU has also strengthened its course offerings in creative and flexible ways in response to the needs and challenges of the 21st century. Deeply committed to the Socratic tenet that the unexamined life is not worth living, we believe that the Liberal Arts and Sciences are the best possible preparation for success in the learned professions. As we introduce programs in professional fields to attract vocationally oriented students, we continue to preserve the faculties of thought that make us human and ensure that students with professional degrees also acquire skills usually associated with the liberal arts such as critical thinking, communication skills, problem solving and so on. And we still have a long way to go as we implement these changes such as fewer readings assigned, less writing, grade inflation, less work on the part of students outside class and many other problems.

In an attempt to reconcile liberal and professional education, we have revised University requirements around three major categories where students need to take courses in Arts and Humanities (Fine Arts, Communication Arts, Arabic Language and Literature, Music Appreciation, Philosophy, Religion, Theatre, Cultural Studies, History, English Literature); Natural Sciences and Mathematics (Computer Science, Biology, Physics, Nutrition); and Social Sciences (Political Science, Gender Studies). The aim of such courses is to provide a multifaceted rather than a compartmentalized education since real-world

problems are far more complex than a single discipline can adequately encompass.

We have also emphasized an interdisciplinary education which is built on pushing boundaries, drawing connections between disparate fields of study, synthesizing ideas and concepts, and applying knowledge gained in one discipline to another. Here the same topic is studied from the viewpoint of more than one discipline, and students are able to successfully connect seemingly unrelated questions, problems or ideas in different fields. By the cross-listing of courses among departments and programs, we have succeeded in enhancing programs with low enrollment. We have also worked on designing literature or sociology courses that cater for medical or Business students, showing students how to think critically and develop creative connections between the disciplines. The intersection between STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and the Humanities has added a new dimension to these fields. As Martha C. Nussabaum maintains in *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (2010), "science, rightly pursued is a friend of the humanities rather than their enemy" (7). The Humanities are important to the sciences not because they produce cultured people, but because they produce better scientists as Nobel laureate Thomas R. Cech (distinguished chemistry and biochemistry professor) puts it. He declares that "scientists need the same skills as humanists to cut through misleading observations and arrive at a defensible interpretation." The Humanities help students develop their cognitive abilities, tolerate ambiguity, recognize bias, acknowledge and appreciate ethical concerns at a time when many relationships are based on profit, manipulation and personal benefits, and when many disciplines steer clear of subjective phenomena and confine their analysis to more objective approaches in an effort to be scientific. By linking Liberal Arts courses with professional programs, the university attempts to provide students with skills that will make them more marketable in today's tough job market (but of course we have problems with the Professional Schools who are not terribly sympathetic).

We have also been involved in team teaching that enables students to cross disciplinary borders in order to deepen the learning experience. For example, (at LAU) we offered a course in 2015 titled "Introduction to Gender Studies" which was taught by a sociologist, a political scientist, and a professor of literature. Gender was taught from various angles: political, sociological, and literary.

Interdisciplinary education also provides a solid foundation to graduate studies, which is built on crossing boundaries, generating epistemological changes, and opening new spaces for independent research. One could say in this connection that skills gained from liberal arts courses are broadly useful, fully transferable, and applicable to any challenge, vocational or otherwise.

Another central mission of LAU which links the past to the present is the strong emphasis on ethics and moral integrity. We aim to teach students to demonstrate ethical judgment, ethical decision-making skills, adaptability to new situations, and tolerance of cultural differences. The sad reality is that the higher educational system is gradually becoming more and more separated and far removed from intellectual and ethical functions. As a result, students become disconnected from the real affairs of the world and remain compliant and submissive to the powers of exploitation and control.

While the liberal arts do not train students for a specialized career path, they offer analytical, evaluative, critical and creative thinking skills (core principles of liberal arts education): the ability to analyze phenomena, ask difficult questions and formulate possible answers, practice and apply scientific methods, test and validate theories, and develop logical, well-evidenced arguments. Such a thorough and precise approach is set against what Matthew Arnold refers to as "the anarchy that lay in lack of critical reflection."

As a tribute to its legacy, LAU established the Woman's Institute in 1973, when it started to admit male students into the university/college. By so doing, we have transformed liberal arts by integrating the female experience into the curriculum. Gender

studies facilitate our ability to question proscribed reality, which is central to independent thinking, equipping students with tools to challenge intellectual purity, and increase students' interest in the centrality of women to society. In addition to the establishment of the Woman's Institute (1973), we have introduced a master's program in Gender Studies, a minor in Gender Studies, and a diploma in Gender in Development and Humanitarian Assistance, in partnership with the continuing education program (CEP).

LAU has also introduced an Honors program which is a selective program that provides enhanced educational opportunities for motivated, academically talented and inquisitive undergraduate students from various disciplines. The program offers special in-depth courses in small classes of twelve, with greater opportunities for participation, increased student-faculty interaction, more individual attention, and lively discussions of contemporary and historical issues, providing experiences and opportunities for dialogue that allow different opinions and values to coexist harmoniously (in addition to other projects especially designed to challenge talented students). In these courses we indulge in liberal education by abandoning teacher-centered, lecture-based approaches directed towards one correct answer, and emphasize open-ended discussions and a variety of perspectives.

Since rapid change in a global world is inevitable, what one needs in education is not solely to accumulate knowledge but also to ensure that students become cognizant of the process of learning (learning how to learn), which inspires them to go on learning throughout their lives. As new jobs are created and current jobs struggle to remain relevant, a vocational skills-based education quickly becomes out of date. We believe our students should be trained to think with rigor and creativity in order to succeed in their professions. To prepare students for future jobs that don't yet exist is to teach them how to be resilient in the face of change and make full use of intellectual, writing and communication skills. A Humanities education empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity,

and change, and to lead a responsible life as actively engaged citizens.

We are also trying to update our educational strategies, to connect more directly with the world beyond campus. We have introduced practical assignments that correlate to life beyond the academy such as community-based learning, internships, capstone projects, student civic or community engagement, and student engagement in leadership programs to prepare them for a professional career. We have also focused on outreach programs, on civic engagement activities and intercultural dialogue, notably the Global Classrooms LAU model United Nations held in partnership with the United Nations Association, the largest student-led program in Lebanon and the region. The program consists of training sessions where students learn UN conference rules of procedure, conflict resolution and negotiation, caucusing, resolution writing, writing position papers, and delivering speeches.

The LAU Model Arab League was established in 2010, targeting high school students from all over Lebanon. It engages students from various religious and political backgrounds in Lebanon to discuss social, political, and economic subjects that affect and shape the Arab world. Student leaders are given the opportunity to debate and form coalitions in order to draft and pass resolutions that seek to resolve some of the Arab world's most difficult challenges. Within this context, students acquire an understanding and appreciation of history, its consequences, and its relatedness to contemporary problems and events. The university's Scholarship Program provides undergraduate grants to promising public high school students who, in addition to their academic degrees, need to complete an internship and a community service project in their villages and hometowns in the way they know best, through awareness campaigns, training and educational sessions, and so forth.

All this is to ensure that students have experiential research and cooperative learning opportunities, in addition to theoretical and practical tools needed to make the world a better place. Such an education develops curiosity, creativity, enthusiasm, critical

self-reflection, social responsibility, and ethical values, all of which enable students to challenge the status quo and free themselves from systems of power that benefit from ignorance and capitulation. In cultivating these qualities in students, the liberal arts serve as a major catalyst and enhancing force to professional education.

In a competitive and evolving global economy, employers are looking for employees who are not solely confined to a specialized skill. They seek candidates with good leadership skills; good written and verbal communication; the desire to learn new things, see things outside the box, get along with a diversity of people, and bring an innovative spirit to the workplace. These well-trained individuals are highly valuable to those in the corporate world because they think beyond the narrow confines of a specific major.

Last but not least, a liberal arts education nourishes the mind through self-reflection. In his essay titled "Of Solitude," Michel de Montaigne maintains that the mind of the learned man is a kind of tower library filled with wise people, thoughts, and anecdotes, where he can keep company with himself. De Montaigne goes on to say that we all have such back rooms in our minds and that the most treasured people are those who have rich and fascinating intellectual furniture in those spaces, rather than a void between their ears.

THE STATUS OF INTERCULTURAL STUDIES IN 15 ARAB COUNTRIES

Kamal Abouchedid

This study examines the degree to which the discourse of 36 Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in 15 Arab countries articulates keywords and sentences that connote styles of pedagogy for intercultural learning such as discussion skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, and cooperative learning. The rationale and theoretical backing for choosing these four meanings are discussed under the methodology section of the study.

Two datasets were utilized for the study. The first dataset was excerpted from a study concerned with the classification of HEIs in the region of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (Bhandari & El-Amine, 2012). Data were triangulated with supplemental information derived from a study on the civic role of higher education in the Arab countries (El-Amine, 2017) following the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia in 2010. The study culminated in a book comprising 10 background papers and 8 topical studies, of which one study focused on the pedagogy of inquiry and deliberation in 36 universities in the Arab countries (Abouchedid, 2017). The latter study rendered a significant amount of raw data amenable for examining the status of intercultural studies from the prism of the styles of pedagogy employed by the HEIs chosen for the study.

The extant literature on teaching intercultural studies in higher education trifurcates into three overarching types: studies on intercultural learning via international exchange programs (e.g., Lauritzen, 1998), often amalgamating formal and informal modes of learning; intercultural learning inside the classroom; and intercultural learning combining in and out of the classroom

learning activities (e.g., Friesenhahn et al., 2013). These modes reflect a continuum ranging from the application of active styles of pedagogy in the classroom to the conduct of outside planned activities such as internships, practicums, fieldwork research, and community service. The literature further points to the perceived benefit of international exchange that tends to improve intercultural competences among students (NAFSA, 2003) and is grounded in the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), which states that interaction among groups from different backgrounds will reduce cultural prejudice and bias among them.

This study endorses the view that intercultural learning is the by-product of three interlaced arenas: curriculum content that emphasizes intercultural learning; styles of pedagogy that hinge upon inquiry-based learning; and international exchange programs that expose students and faculty to differing views and cultures. Thus, data used in the current study provides an evidence-driven narrative revolving around three interlaced components underpinning intercultural studies: (i) inquiry-based pedagogy that leverages intercultural learning; (ii) international exchanges; and (iii) emphasis on intercultural topics as pronounced in the mission statements of 310 HEIs in seven MENA region countries. These axial components provide a comparative lens through which to cross-examine the discourse of 36 HEIs in 15 Arab countries in relation to the styles of pedagogy that opt to facilitate intercultural learning.

As a prefatory note, it is worth mentioning that the Arab countries are presently reforming their higher education systems in the name of global economic competitiveness, while pursuing distinct models of reform, namely neoliberal, quality assurance, and internationalization (Buncker, 2011). While Buncker offered a useful typology for classifying the various reform initiatives in the Arab countries, the characteristic features of HEIs in the Arab countries show — regardless of the differential reform models they pursue — a distinct leaning towards the neo-liberal reform model carried out largely through functional education that centers on practical applications more than theory. The two other reform models — quality assurance and internationalization —

constitute potent strategies for leveraging intercultural learning since quality assurance partly emphasizes diversity standards amicable to intercultural learning while internationalization provides myriad opportunities for intercultural exposure and learning from the other.

Figure 1 shows the subsets of reform models in higher education in the Arab countries, with the 'broad foundation of knowledge' model appearing as a stand-alone offering as opposed to social cohesion and normative behavior pursued by the 'state-led' model or the 'professional-oriented' and the 'market-economy' models that collectively align skills and competencies with labor market needs.

Figure 1: Subset of Reform Models in the Arab Countries

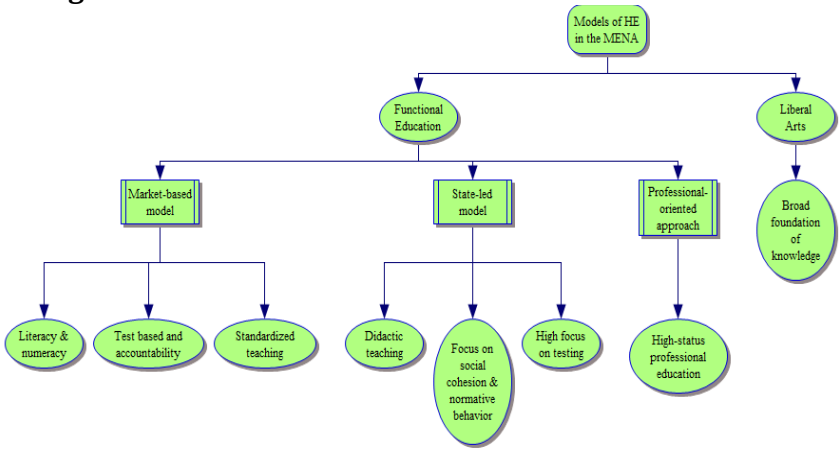


Figure 1 serves to pave the way for the subsequent discussion on the degree to which the 36 HEIs chosen for the study accent the pedagogical component of intercultural learning as publically divulged in their official discourse on websites.

Methodology

This study employs discourse analysis methodology to portray the degree to which 36 private and public HEIs use keywords denoting inquiry and deliberation, which promote and facilitate intercultural learning, in pedagogy. According to Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000), critical discourse analysts examine wide-ranging

topics, including political discourse, ideology, racism, economic discourse, media language, gender, institutional discourse, and education. The process includes interpretation of published material as a resource for analysis and synthesis (Fairclough 1989) of discourse documents downloaded from the websites of the HEIs surveyed.

Procedural Steps

A list of key words on the pedagogy of inquiry and deliberation was excerpted from the pertinent literature using desktop research. These keywords constitute a precursor for facilitating intercultural learning, particularly critical thinking, problem-solving, cooperative learning, discussion, and deliberation. In addition, a four-tier taxonomy was adapted for this study to sort the keywords subsumed under the pedagogy of inquiry and deliberation into four dimensions (see table 1).

Table 1: The four-tier taxonomy of meanings used in the study

Skill	Activities
Intellectual	Problem-solving, critical thinking, inquiry, discussion, independent thinking, competency
Participatory	Cooperation, cooperative, collaboration, interaction, open mind, deliberation, dialogue
Research	Reflection
Persuasion	Debate, listening

Four meanings were adopted for the study based on their theoretical underpinnings and roots traceable to foundations in the philology of education such as progressivism, perennialism, and essentialism. Table 2 shows the alignment between keywords used for the discourse and the main schools of thought.

A discourse card was designed for each HEI separately. The discourse card was laid out to classify discourse data derived from mission statements, visions, values, strategic plans, and notes published by members of the senior administration such as presidents, deans, directors, and chairpersons. Texts extracted

from respective university websites were pasted into the discourse record accordingly.

Sentences containing keywords were highlighted and tautological texts irrelevant to the four meanings were removed from the discourse record through a process of revision and cleaning. The final consolidated records were used as the main source for synthesizing and reporting findings. Moreover, in order to quantify the distribution of keywords and sentences across the 36 HEIS, word crunching was performed and the number of sentences and keywords was entered into an Excel spreadsheet for obtaining frequencies and percentages.

Table 2: Alignment between philosophical foundations of education and the keywords used in the discourse

Schools of Thought	Curriculum	Pedagogy of inquiry and deliberation keywords
Perennialism (Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998)	Perennialists stress teacher-guided seminars, where students and teachers engage in dialogue and mutual inquiry.	Cooperation, cooperative, collaboration, interaction
Progressivism (Alistair, 2000)	Students learn by doing, e.g. going on fieldtrips where they can interact with nature and society. Students are encouraged to interact with one another and develop social virtues such as cooperation and tolerance for different points of view. Students should be constantly experimenting and solving problems; reconstructing their experiences and creating new knowledge.	Problem-solving, critical thinking, inquiry, discussion, independent thinking, competency, interaction, cooperation
Essentialism (Heslep, 1997)	Disciple-based and teacher-centered	---
Reconstructionism (Tanner & Tanner, 1980)	Students should learn to come to a consensus on issues. Group work is encouraged. Improving mutual understanding and cooperation should be the focus of the curriculum	Dialogue, debate, deliberation, cooperation

Results

Mission statement

As mentioned earlier, data on mission statements and internationalization were derived from the classification of higher education study involving 310 HEIs. Results showed that reference to components of intercultural studies such as citizenship was low on the scale of priorities in the mission statements of these institutions (see table 3).

Table 3: Components of intercultural studies

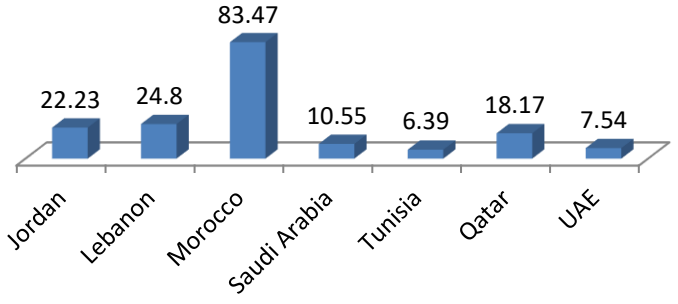
Dimensions	Yes	No
Citizenship	79 (25.5%)	231 (74.5%)
Social integration	93 (30%)	217 (70%)
Diversity	44 (14.2%)	266 (85.6%)

Internationalization

Another indicator used for gauging internationalization was the number of international agreements for exchange signed by the HEIs involved in the study. Findings revealed that the total number of agreements was 2288, of which 1712 were international cooperation agreements as opposed to 289 with Arab countries and 287 within countries. These results should be approached cautiously since little information existed as to whether these agreements were active and included international or regional exchange of faculty and students. However, this finding remains a positive indicator of internationalization for promoting, though ostensibly, intercultural studies in the Arab countries.

Regarding the total number of international agreements, the highest mean was observed in Morocco followed by Lebanon, while the lowest mean was in Tunisia as shown in figure 2.

Figure 2: Percentage of International Agreements



Discourse Analysis Results

As mentioned earlier, four meanings signifying the pedagogy of inquiry and deliberation for intercultural learning were used.

Cooperative/collaborative learning

Of the total sentences comprising the four meanings, only eleven sentences (4%) on cooperative/collaborative learning appeared. These were in only 6 HEIs, accounting for 16.6% of the total number of institutions surveyed. This shows a limited emphasis of HEIs on cooperative/collaborative learning, revealing a weakness in employing active and mutual learning in the curriculum.

Problem-solving

One hundred and twenty-nine sentences accenting problem-solving appeared in the discourse of the HEIs surveyed, constituting 46.9% of the total number of sentences with the four meanings. The highest number of sentences in the discourse was clustered in this meaning and was pronounced by 25 universities, comprising two-thirds of the total number of HEIs surveyed. The problem-solving pedagogical component seems to be ubiquitous in HEIs offering professional degree programs such as Engineering and Medical Sciences rather than in liberal education institutions, which constituted a meager of 3.7% in the sample.

Critical thinking

Critical thinking had the second largest distribution of sentences after problem-solving in the discourse of the HEIs surveyed. It had 118 sentences, constituting 42.9% of the total number of sentences with the four meanings. In addition, critical thinking appeared in the discourse of 24 (66.6%) universities as opposed to 12 (33.4%) which did not refer to this meaning.

Debate/discussion

Immediately discernible is the near absence of debate and discussion in the discourse. Debate and discussion accounted for only 6.18% of the total number of sentences in the discourse, higher than cooperative/collaborative learning by 2.18%, and was only pronounced by 12 universities out of the 36 HEI surveyed.

Results by sector

Between-sector differences were found. The public sector was characterized by lengthy wordage (446,255 words with a mean of 18,593 as opposed to 95,902 in the private sector, which had a mean of 7,991). There were 186 sentences signifying pedagogy of inquiry and deliberation in the public sector as opposed to 89 sentences in the private one. The mean of sentences signifying the four meanings was slightly higher in the public sector ($\bar{X} = 7.75$) than it was in the private one ($\bar{X} = 7.41$). Table 4 summarizes the differences between the public and private universities in the sample.

Table 4: Sector differences

Sector	Number of Universities	Wordage	Mean of Wordage/ university	Number & percent of sentences	Mean of sentences signifying pedagogy of inquiry/university
Public	24	446,255	18,593	186 (67.6%)	7. 75
Private	12	95,902	7,991	89 (32.3%)	7.41
Total	36	542,157	15,059.92	275 (99.9%)	7.63

Speakers

Two main sources for the sentences were identified: institutional directives including university mission, vision, values and strategic plan; and other sources represented by speeches of president, deans, chairpersons, and directors. The highest percentage of sentences was pronounced by departmental objectives, followed by mission statements and then by vision of the institution. The discourse of the 36 HEIs demonstrated a department/faculty-oriented discourse where individual speeches were relatively low, as shown in table 7. This is quite reasonable since the majority of the constituencies covered across the 36 universities were departments, faculties, or other academic units (see table 5).

Concluding remarks

Unlike cooperative learning, problem-solving and critical thinking meanings in the discourse were moderately accented by HEIs despite 31% of them scoring zero sentences on problem-solving and another 33.4% scoring zero sentences on critical thinking (e.g. Senaa University as well as universities in Algiers, Tunisia, and Morocco). Both problem-solving and critical thinking benefit not only the individual but also society in general and represent tools for cohesive social functioning (Beyer, 1995). The discourse, however, does not provide tools for judging whether these institutions do promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills among students; rather it blurs the boundaries between actual teaching and rhetoric in the discourse, raising doubts about advocating critical thinking in cultures dominated by uncritical submission to authority. Overall, the discourse on the meaning of critical thinking does not allow for discerning whether it follows the Socratic Method or the Sophistic one, which connotes winning an argument or taking advantage of others (Paul, 2011).

Table 5: Distribution of sentences by speaker

Discourse	Cooperative learning	Problem-solving	Critical thinking	Discussion -debate	Total	%
Objectives	2	54	43	9	108	39.27
Mission	1	36	34	2	73	26.55
Vision	0	5	7	1	13	4.73
Values	0	1	0	0	1	0.36
Strategic plan	3	5	7	3	18	6.55
Others	0	12	7	1	20	7.27
President	0	1	4	0	5	1.82
Chair	3	9	8	1	21	7.64
Dean	2	5	8	0	15	5.45
Director	0	1	0	0	1	0.36
Total	11	129	118	17	275	100

As mentioned earlier, debate/discussion in the classroom was limited (6.18% of total number of sentences) and was pronounced by only 12 universities. As for cross-country comparison, Qatar followed by Iraq scored above the average for words on the discourse of the four meanings. However, given the top-down governance system of the public sector in these two countries, one must wonder whether critical thinking and discussion/debate are actually practiced in class, given the predominant cultural contexts that accede to authority.

Regarding the sources of sentences or speakers, these were directive in nature as represented by objectives of departments followed by mission statements of departments and faculties while the speeches of Deans, and Chairpersons were relegated to a lower position, reflecting a common practice of governance in higher education.

The pedagogy of engaging students in the HEIs surveyed does not seem to form a *terra firma* for intercultural learning. Intercultural studies seem to be losing ground in favor of specialized programs that would fit in with the functional requisites of the labor market. However, there remains room for improvement. Intercultural studies can be strengthened through complementary activities such as exchange/study abroad programs and more internationalization of HEIs, for example

considering Internationalization at Home (IaH), which promotes intercultural content in the curriculum at large.

Overall, the picture that has emerged from the discourse analysis suggests that the pedagogy of inquiry and deliberation for intercultural learning is still incipient and additional studies into the curriculum of intercultural studies would create a connected chain of evidence related to the intercultural learning trajectory.

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THE RELEVANCE OF INTERCULTURAL STUDIES IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

Elias Halabi

Teaching cultural studies at universities is a way to insure that the academic institutions are not transformed into mere professional schools that graduate so called technical barbarians. This concern is reflected in the mission statements of the universities that have a cultural studies program integrated into their undergraduate curricula. The number of these courses may differ from one major to another, but no student can graduate without taking at least two cultural studies courses. If we take, for example, the mission statement of the University of Balamand, it reads:

> The University is dedicated to graduating professionals who are well-rounded, critical thinkers, life-long learners, and active citizens in their societies… Through quality education, rigorous research, concern for public good, and engagement with the community, the University seeks to contribute to nation building, ethical standards, inter-cultural dialogue, environmental responsibility, and human development.

One crucial dimension of the mission statement of a university is its impact on the broader community. Universities are not islands of learning. They have clear duties towards the wider public and the national environment. Because of liberal arts and sciences, the universities in Lebanon and worldwide have been beacons of political activism, especially in the eighties of the twentieth century, and the Lebanese civil war provides countless examples.

Modernity, as a result of its secularized view of the world, is very much impacted by a westernized experience of enlightenment. This enlightenment has also brought a new reality

to our region induced by Catholic and the Protestant[4] waves of missionaries. These waves were precursors to and the catalyst of the Arab *Nahda*. Many of the prominent Arab intellectuals and educational and academic institutions in Lebanon were positive outcomes of these waves. The different *Nahda* projects and reform endeavors attempted to use the Arab language and culture as a common platform, and to build on the Christian contribution[5] to Islamic civilization in order to provide the backbone for a secularized political and social modus vivendi in the Arab world. "As Max Weber and others suggest, secularization is the demystifying of the world, where religion is relegated to a smaller and smaller role among a decreasing number of people and organizations."[6] Though this secularization was not hostile to religion, many Muslim scholars have struggled with the question of reconciling Islam with modernity, going to the extreme of postulating that going back to true Islam is the prerequisite of true modernity in the Arab world. The failure of these reform projects and of the post-colonial nation states to deliver on their promises raised a lot of questions and suspicions around the role of culture and intellectuals in general in shaping the future of the Arab nations. Religious movements stepped in to claim that religion has the true answer to all the queries and agonies of humankind. In this era of globalization,[7] borders have disappeared in this cyber world. As people have become closer, they have discovered world cultures, and they have discovered themselves. The problem we face in our region with this self-awareness resides in

[4] Rev. Habib Badr, "The Protestant Evangelical Community in the Middle East: Impact on Cultural and Societal Developments," *International Review of Mission* LXXXIX, January 2003, p. 52.

[5] Jerome Chahine, "Christians and the Arab Renaissance," in *Christianity: A History in the Middle East,* ed. Habib Badr et al., Beirut, MECC publications, 2005, pp. 797-824.

[6] Michael O. Emerson and David Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," Article online available on: https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/29737734.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A85f16f38f9f3a5351b3e2cb5931a594a accessed April 16, 2019, 127.

[7] Globalization encompasses flows of information and of people, and some have argued that this international system has meanwhile replaced the cold war order (T. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, New York, Picador. Google Scholar, 2000).

the fact that it is apophatic, meaning that identity is determined by what it is not culturally, being not westernized, and by what it is religiously, being Muslim or Christians.

9/11 and the Arab Spring gave rise to religious fundamentalism and generated an identity crisis. Religious fundamentalism is perceived as a reaction to the modernity that demystified the world. "Secularization theory failed to anticipate something: that the demystification of the world provided within it the seeds both for the remystification of the world and resistance to the demystification."[8] Cultural studies can play the double role of mystification of the world by providing an alternative narrative of human vocation and existence and, at the same time, they can demystify this narrative by submitting it to human reasoning and contextualization processes.

One of the major characteristics of religious fundamentalism is "reactivity to the marginalization of religion: Fundamentalism is first and foremost a defense of a religious tradition, a tradition perceived to be eroding or under attack by the processes of modernization and secularization."[9] Therefore, intercultural discourses and philosophies are perceived from within the spectrum of compatibility/antagonism with personal convictions and religious beliefs. The challenge resides in the fact that in cultural studies classes, the texts and theoretical paradigms are accepted or rejected in as much as they endorse or invalidate the various religious views of the world, human existence and the mission of humankind. For example, ISIS has banned certain disciplines in the curricula of their schools because they are considered as apostasies or *Kufr*.

The second impact of religious fundamentalism is "the dualistic world view: Reality is clearly divided into the good and the evil, light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness."[10] So the challenge is to make students feel

[8] Peter Berger, *A Far Glory: The Quest for Faith in the Age of Credulity*, New York, Free Press, 1992 quotes in Emerson and Hartman, "The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism," p. 127.
[9] Emerson and Hartman, p. 134.
[10] Ibid.

comfortable about controversies and renounce this black-and-white thinking. Moreover, students tend to mix up accepting with believing. Acceptance, in the context of cultural studies, is recognition of a certain validity or coherence of a concept or theory, while believing is not always subject to cognitive scrutiny and proofs. The question that arises next is whether intercultural awareness poses a threat to personal beliefs and convictions. Such awareness may generate internal conflicts, especially if the person has incompatible or inconsistent values.

The key to addressing these challenges is by developing critical debates about the fundamental themes and texts and their relationship to different cultures, identities, genders, expressions and ideologies. Students have to become aware of the wide spectrum of views and nuances that may occur when we move from texts to their historical, cultural and social interpretations. This religious fundamentalism spills over beyond militancy to reach the different facets of human existence. UOB mission statement reads: *The University seeks to limit the influence of dogmatism and fundamentalism in intellectual, social, political, religious and cultural manifestations*.

Therefore, the duty of the university is to accept this challenge if it is to remain faithful to its mission. Universities should uphold in their mission statements, curricula and practice the values of equality, participation and human rights and dignity. They should foster inclusiveness and advocate for religious and cultural diversity as a standard academic praxis.

It is important to note that texts and text books are not sufficient in themselves to ensure that these values are passed on to the students. "If teachers do not value and accept cultural differences and display this in their behavior, the best intercultural education curriculum will prove ineffective."[11] The objective of a cultural studies program is not to compare and contrast religions, doctrines, history, symbols and faith traditions

[11] Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Renáta Katalin Smith, "Interreligious and Intercultural Education for Dialogue, Peace and Social Cohesion," article on line, available on: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11159-016-9583-4 accessed April 16, 2019, 4.

but to focus on dialogue, encourage peer-to-peer learning and foster human interactions as a continuous learning process. In that sense the instructor of an intercultural studies class will become a facilitator, and his/her role will be to challenge the students, bringing them outside of their comfort zones in order to open up and break their stereotypes.

"The recognition of this point [that logos is obtained through dialogue] is fundamental to our thinking about education because it frees us from the mythological view of the self and human reason as fixed, independent and unchanging creations; redirects our thinking away from the hypothetical private entity called 'mind', and helps us to focus on the real world of human actions, language, intentions, meanings, goals, values, practices, institutions and customs within which we are all born and develop."[12] The desired outcome of this diverse context would be to foster an intellectual, pluralistic environment.

However, Abu-Nimer warned that academic institutions alone cannot address these challenges since: "A strong society's immunity and resilience against exclusion, discrimination and abuse of basic human individual and collective rights is dependent on a number of social, political, economic, legal, religious and educational institutions."[13]

In most research centers today, the scope of interreligious studies has been broadened to encompass the intercultural element with a focus on peace. In interreligious contexts, intercultural studies are not an intellectual luxury, but rather an existential necessity. Accepting differences and embracing diversity in all of its forms become crucial conditions for social cohesion and national coexistence. One of the major challenges Lebanese society is facing today is the total separation between

[12] Tasos Kazepides, "Education as Dialogue," *Educational Philosophy and Theory,* 2012:44(9), pp. 90-91 quoted in Mohammad Abu-Nimer and Renáta Katalin Smith, "Interreligious and Intercultural Education for Dialogue, Peace and Social cohesion," pp. 8-9.

[13] Mohammad Abu-Nimer, "Religion and Peacebuilding: Reflections on Current Challenges and Future Prospects", *Journal of Inter-Religious Dialogue and State of Formation,* 2015:16. Quoted in Abu-Nimer and Smith, "Interreligious," p. 2.

Christians and Muslims. Some youngsters may only meet religious others at universities or even later on at workplaces. The religious diversity in Lebanon does not necessarily generate a pluralistic reality. Therefore, it is the duty of the universities to fill in this knowledge gap. The universities should provide an initiation about the ethos of dialogue and acceptance. They should provide a safe space for healthy interaction of people and ideas. Cultural studies should go beyond safe topics to delve into controversies in an atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance of differences. Universities, through cultural debates, can plant the seed of true coexistence of people, ideas, cultures, and religions. A successful cultural studies program in a mutli-religious context should focus on transforming the understanding of religion and the perception of the different other, from being a threat to our personal identity to becoming an opportunity to widen our views of the world and to deepen our belief in our own faith tradition. In our Semitic tradition, the verb to know "لتعارفوا" acquires its full meaning when we move from the intellectual dimension to meet the different other in his/her deep humanity.

CURRICULUM REFORM IN HIGHER EDUCATION: REDESIGNING THE INTERCULTURAL STUDIES PROGRAMS

Berge Traboulsi

L. to R. Anita Moutchoyan (moderator), Dr. Joseph Al Agha, Berge Traboulsi, Ziad Suidan

Abstract

After teaching Intercultural Studies courses (IST courses) for the last 20 years at Haigazian University (HU), I find myself, towards the end of the second decade of the 21st century, challenged to reflect on my academic career and to offer some suggestions and recommendations concerning the future of higher education in Lebanon, the need for curricula reformation, and the urgency of redesigning the IST programs at HU and other sister institutions.

Introduction

From the outset, let us reflect on a case that I wrote nine years ago about the ethical challenges of teaching, assessment and evaluation in higher education.

"A Sciences student had no interest in humanities courses. She considered some general requirement courses, such as religion

and cultural studies, irrelevant to her needs. She believed that they are included in the program for profit purposes (on the contrary, the university strongly considers that these courses are of cultural and personal value). Consequently, she became a very passive student and got a failing grade on the midterm. Later on, she asked the instructor to bump the average up in a way that she would guarantee a passing grade. Actually, in principle she could have been enrolled in a different section where learners prepare the exam questions in advance and thus no one fails. Many classmates objected to her request to curve the grades; they were aware of her unfair request since she was asking for a grade that she did not deserve. It might be that the other instructor was building his popularity through compromising standards of learning. In the meantime, her instructor realized that her recommendation of the course was not favorable."[14]

This case exposes, in a few lines, the main problems and challenges that academics and learners of Intercultural Studies (IST) (and possibly other disciplines too) face in many Institutions of Higher Education (IHE). Accordingly, the intention of this paper is to shed light on the real causes behind this and similar cases; it will reflect on: (1) Higher Education (HE) within the Lebanese context; (2) reforming the HE Curricula; and (3) redesigning the IST Programs.

I. A 'Socratic-Like' Approach to Higher Education in the Lebanese Context

Some thoughtful questions related to higher education, university, and curricula need to be thoroughly examined and answered in light of the 21st century challenges and needs. The big questions facing us at present, I assume, must make IHEs' boards, faculty members, and administrators as well as learners think critically and strategically about their future in order to be clear and confident about their academic and career choices. Is

[14] B. Traboulsi, "Ethical Challenges in Today's Higher Education Institutions in Lebanon: A Stakeholder Analysis", in Louis Colombo and Aaran Vlasak (eds.), *The Public Life of Ethics*, Oxford, Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2010, pp. 29-36.

this approach not in line with what Socrates, the Greek philosopher, aimed at through addressing questions that required critical thinking from his audience?

A. Higher Education in the 21st Century

It is important to re-imagine higher education and reflect on its role in light of the needs, challenges and changes in 21st century glocal societies and markets.[15] Accordingly, without progressive strategic plans, IHEs will not be able to survive in the future. Thus, the following questions must be thoroughly examined and answered:

1. What are the educational gaps between high school and university? How are they closed?
2. Is traditional, campus-based higher education the only pathway of learning?
3. What is the nature of competition among the universities? Is it like 'an arms race' or 'a bazaar' in order to attract more students/learners?
4. Are the learners paying for grades and a university degree, or for deep education (content/knowledge, social and emotional skills, applications, and values/ethics)? Or both?
5. How are university learners engaged in the learning process?
6. What exactly is 21st century education? What is its purpose? Is it:

- To prepare learners for life—although we do not know how it will look?
- To expose the learners to how the real world functions—as if we can easily deal with complexities?
- To sail in the ocean of information and knowledge with outdated 'navigation systems'?
- To respond to market, labor and social demands?

[15] See also J. Duberstadt, (2010) "New Roles for the 21st-century University", available at https://issues.org/duderstadt/; Rich, E. (2010). "How do you define 21st-century learning?" available at https://www.edweek.org/tsb/articles/2010/10/12/01panel.h04.html; Driscoll, M. (2016) "Education in the 21st century", available at https://thinkstrategicforschools.com/education-21st-century/ .

- To deal with social, political, and environmental complexities (e.g., diversity, uncertainty, inequality [social and economic], ambiguity, contradictions, interconnectedness, turbulences, change, and instability) and crises or various unsustainable practices from a disciplinary or interdisciplinary/synthetic perspective?
- To coach the learners to be creative and innovative?
- To transform oneself, the other, and society?
- To profess, to lecture, and to instruct knowledge and thus to fill the empty vessels of the learners? Or it is about the coaching of knowledge?
- To educate (Lat. *Educare*) young people; i.e., *"to open up minds to new perspectives and then lead them forth to a lifetime of learning"*, as stated by Prof. David Helfand (2013) in his TED talk on *"Designing a university for the new millennium"*[16]?

B. The University of the 21st Century

Many factors will be forcing campus-based universities to go online in the coming decades of the 21st century. We mention *inter alia* the following: globalization, the advance of technology, greater access to the internet, the increasingly unaffordable cost of traditional education, the social status of the learners, skills needed in the market, wasted and inconvenient time spent on campus, etc. Accordingly, the following questions should not be ignored:

1. Is the IHE a place to recall and share information about the past (much is available online and accessible via mobile phones!) or to produce knowledge useful for the future?
2. Are the current campus-based IHEs designed for 21st century education?
3. Are the current IHEs up to the 21st century shifts, demands, needs, and challenges in our world (e.g., glocal cultures, the huge amount of information, the various communication technologies, the Internet [Google, YouTube], social media,

[16] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DZQe73IXZtU&t=126s .

economic complexities, social, political and economic challenges and problems [e.g., nationalism, immigration, war, religion, work], e changes in the educational model, etc.)? Will they still play any significant role in our life? If not, what should they do in order not to become extinct?

4. Does the IHE's culture shape the learner's cognitive, socio-emotional, behavioral profile? Do institutional culture and climate have an impact on teaching and learning?
5. Will the current campus-based pedagogy become obsolete in the second half of the 21st century? Will the cellphone be the 'new classroom' in the 21st century?[17]
6. Is it not time to shift from pedagogy to webagogy in HE, in Lebanon and the region?[18]

C. HE Curricula of the 21st Century

Many universities in Lebanon and abroad provide liberal arts education where students take courses in the Arts, the Sciences, and the Humanities as well as in a specialized field or major. Syllabi usually refer in the course description to the content (themes and topics) and in the course learning objectives and outcomes to valuable skills and attitudes that learners will be able to acquire—and that employers seek in their employees —such as teamwork, communication skills, interdisciplinary skills, analytical reasoning, critical thinking, innovative thinking, interpersonal skills, problem solving, decision making, data analysis, positive attitude and so many more. It is to note, however, that not everything mentioned on the syllabus meets the aforementioned goals. Accordingly, it is imperative to find answers to the following questions, if we want to examine holistically the curriculum content:

1. How are the various curricula designed and developed? Can any university draw a DNA-like map of learning of its

[17] See also K. Manning, (2016) "The future of higher education", available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XfRoM21qHtE .

[18] See also B. Traboulsi, "From Pedagogy to Webagogy in Higher Education: Perspectives and Prospectives", in *I-TCE Proceedings*, Gulf University for Science and Technology, Kuwait, 2008, pp. 223-29.

different curricula and their respective programs of study? What about the various co-curricular activities?
2. How have the intended, the implemented, and the achieved curricula been reviewed, modified, and transformed in the past decades?
3. How is technology infused into the curriculum? Which digital education tools and platforms do we use in our classes?
4. How do the curricula impact the learner's development?
5. Are the learners (as primary stakeholders and real partners!) involved in the curriculum design? If yes, how? Do undergraduate learners know what they need and want?
6. Do we need to reorient, or reform, reconstruct education? Do we need a new type of learning in the 21st century?

II. A 'UNESCO-Like' Approach to Reforming the HE Curricula in Lebanon

Lebanon, like all member states of UNESCO, is called (1) to raise awareness of 'Global Citizenship Education' (GCED)[19] and implement it; (2) to consider 'Education for Sustainable Development' (ESD)[20] as the new paradigm that must be followed; and (3) to implement the vision and actions of 'The World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century'.[21] UNESCO's approach to GCED is *"holistic, transformative, contextualized, value based, and set in a larger commitment to promote inclusive, equitable quality education"*. Furthermore, GCED is based on the three domains of learning:[22] (a) cognitive (i.e., *"knowledge and thinking skills necessary to better understand the world and its complexities"*); (b) socio-emotional (i.e., *"values, attitudes and social skills that enable learners to develop affectively, psychosocially, and physically and to enable them to live together with others respectfully and peacefully"*), and (c) behavioral (i.e., *"conduct, performance, practical application and engagement*"). Moreover, Bloom's Taxonomy, which consists of six major categories (Knowledge,

[19] https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced .
[20] https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development .
[21] http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/wche/declaration_eng.htm .
[22] https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced/action .

Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation), remains 'the compass' that guides both faculty and learners in their academic endeavor.[23]

Reforming the HE curricula in Lebanon requires the leading IHEs to introduce radical changes to their organizational culture, which should become more oriented towards the 17 'Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs).[24] These goals are the following: 1) No Poverty; 2) Zero Hunger; 3) Good Health and Well-being; 4) Quality Education; 5) Gender Equality; 6) Clean Water and Sanitation; 7) Affordable and Clean Energy; 8) Decent Work and Economic Growth; 9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; 10) Reduced Inequality; 11) Sustainable Cities and Communities; 12) Responsible Production and Consumption; 13) Climate Action; 14) Life below Water; 15) Life on Land; 16) Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; 17) Partnerships to achieve the Goal. The remaining question is: What about 'Life in Space'?! Shouldn't it be the 18th goal of SDG?

Last but not least, it is important to mention that several world organizations are focusing on the needs of 21st century learners. The World Economic Forum has listed 16 skills classified in 3 categories:[25]

a. Foundational literacies (how learners apply core skills to everyday tasks): 1. Literacy; 2. Numeracy; 3. Scientific literacy; 4. ICT literacy; 5. Financial literacy; 6. Cultural and civic literacy;
b. Competencies (how learners approach complex challenges): 7. Critical thinking/problem-solving; 8. Creativity; 9. Communication; 10. Collaboration; and
c. Character qualities (how learners approach their changing environment): 11. Curiosity; 12. Initiative; 13. Persistence/grit; 14. Adaptability; 15. Leadership; 16. Social and Cultural awareness.

[23] https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/blooms-taxonomy/ .
[24] https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/ .
[25] http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEFUSA_NewVisionforEducation_Report2015.pdf .

III. A 'De Bono-Like' Approach to Reforming the IST Programs

If we want to apply the critical thinking technique of De Bono's Six thinking Hats® tool[26] to the case that I read earlier and the purpose of my paper, an analysis of the current IST program at HU and several constructive ideas can be presented:

- WHITE HAT [Neutral information, facts and figures]
- HU university requirement courses (6-9 cr.)
- Selected readings (from about 12-15 books in each course), various classical and traditional themes and topics, from the 3rd millennium BCE till the 20th century CE
- Texts: Reading, explanation and analysis (?!); discussions
- Handouts; notes; additional readings; AV materials
- Assessment: Tests (60-90%); Projects, assignments and presentations (10-30%); Attendance (10%).
- No curiosity or interest among the majority of learners to read complete books or articles.
- Most of the learners forget the IST content within a short period of time! A major question remains: What are the skills that IST learners acquire in attending IST courses and how do they make the best use of them in their lives?
- RED HAT [Intuition, hunches, emotions and feelings]
- Some like and love the content, the instructor, teaching tools, and/or the assessment and the grade distribution; others don't!
- Some fear to openly express their opinions in front of the 'other' concerning critical opinions about religious, social, and political issues.
- Some faculty members may dislike the idea of 'curriculum reform'; they fear losing their jobs.
- BLACK HAT [Caution, problems, difficulties, risks, obstacles, dangers and weaknesses]
- Misunderstanding/misapplication of critical thinking.
- Dealing with various books and authors as well as long historical periods and gaps.

[26] https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_07.htm .

- Lack of appropriate knowledge and experience in handling critical and sensitive issues.
- Lack of references of the selected readings and our 21st century context.
- No real and deep participation by the majority of the learners.
- The grading system relies heavily on closed-book assessments (tests + exam).
- No innovation in assessment practices.
- Redesigning the curricula is a long process full of obstacles and complications.
- Changing the nature of the courses may cause some minor transfer and cross-registration problems.

• YELLOW HAT [Benefits, positive assessment, constructive and generative thinking]

- Learners are able to 'taste' various texts that go back to different eras and contexts.
- Some texts may provoke debates and critical thinking.
- Group work and cooperative learning enhance diversity, tolerance, and cooperation.
- Curriculum reform may liberate education from its traditional captivity.

• GREEN HAT [Provocation, creative thinking, growth, solutions]

- To redesign the IST courses according to themes rather than authors and books.
- To examine topics on: Sustainable development goals; the various types of intelligence (social, political, cultural, emotional); Artificial Intelligence; climate change; technology; corruption; leadership; science; biodiversity; the universe; the environment; change; reform; ethics; human rights; good governance; etc.
- To look for IST connections with other courses.
- To train learners on various cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral skills.
- To encourage freedom of conscience, thought, and expression.

- To invest in high-level technology in order to increase learners' participation in class.
- To integrate e-learning and webagogy activities.
- To apply effective learning strategies.
- To replace some hard copy readings with AV lectures, documentaries, and online literature.
- To limit testing's weight to 50% of the Final Grade.

- BLUE HAT [Control of Thinking, summaries, overviews and conclusions]
- To transform education and improve learning.
- To train IHE learners to meet 21st century challenges and needs.
- To benefit from the past and to shape the future.

Needless to say curriculum reform requires deep knowledge and experience in change leadership and management within educational contexts.[27] As a matter of fact, many models and processes from non-educational fields can also be accessed or used in order to achieve such goals. I will mention, *inter alia*, Lewin and Kotter's change models. Lewin's model[28] is a three-stage process as follows: 1) Unfreeze the current situation; 2) Change the current situation; and 3) Freeze the desired situation. Kotter's model[29] consists of the following 8-step process for leading change: 1) Establishing a sense of urgency; 2) Creating the guiding coalition; 3) Developing a vision and strategy; 4) Communicating the change vision; 5) Empowering broad-based action; 6) Generating short-term wins; 7) Consolidating gains and producing more change; and 8) Anchoring new approaches in the culture. Needless to say it is essential to review the basic types of curriculum design, i.e., subject-centered, learner-centered, and problem-centered design, in assessing, developing, designing or reengineering, and implementing the various types of curriculum

[27] See also A. Pegg, (2013) ""We Think That's the Future": Curriculum reform initiatives in higher education", available at https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/curriculum_reform_final_19th_dec_1.pdf .

[28] https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_94.htm .

[29] https://www.kotterinc.com/8-steps-process-for-leading-change/ .

(core-curricular and co-curricular). These types are the following: a) recommended curriculum; b) written curriculum; c) taught curriculum; d) supported curriculum; e) assessed curriculum; f) learned curriculum; and g) hidden curriculum.[30]

Last but not least, I would like to propose 3 non-sequential 3 cr. Courses, along with their topics and materials, that can be useful in redesigning the IST Programs—I hope that Haigazian University will take the lead towards that goal.

1. *History of Human Thought.*[31] This course aims to discuss and analyze themes, from various intercultural and interreligious perspectives, related to life, religion, history, truth, death, freedom, reason, science, law, fate, human nature, virtue, ethics, war, peace, revolution, metaphysics, etc.
2. *Glocal Citizenship*. This course aims to discuss and analyze the content of major universal/international, regional (of the Arab League) and national instruments[32] pertaining to human rights, civil and political rights, social and cultural rights, justice, peace, pacifism, the environment, secularism, social media, cyberspace, etc.
3. *Leadership*: This course aims to discuss and analyze the content of books and articles about leadership related to essential leadership, leadership theory and practice, strategic leadership across cultures, thought leadership, leading change, bad leadership, etc.

[30] https://simplyeducate.me/2015/01/07/seven-school-curriculum-types-and-their-classroom-implications/ .

[31] A good reference can be *Ideas that Shaped Mankind* by Felipe Fernández-Armesto (2004) [Available at http://www.rosenfels.org/Armesto.pdf].

[32] e.g., Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, the Declaration on the Right to Development, the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action (World Conference on Human Rights), the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the UN Declaration on sexual orientation and gender identity, the UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity; the UNESCO Declaration Bioethics and Human Rights; the UNESCO Declaration of Ethical Principles in relation to Climate Change; the UNESCO Declaration of Human Duties and Responsibilities etc.

Conclusion

In conclusion, higher education in Lebanon needs drastic changes at various levels in order to survive and contribute to the well-being of future generations, both faculty and learners. Relevant in this context are the following two quotes that should be read in parallel. The first is by William Arthur Ward (+ 1994) who considered that "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."[33] The second is by the author of this paper who became inspired and wrote: "The mediocre learner memorizes. The good learner understands. The superior learner experiences. The great learner innovates."

[33] https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/william_arthur_ward_103463 .

CULTURAL STUDIES AT THE CROSSROADS: PROSPECTS IN A NEOLIBERAL AGE: RUMINATIONS, REFLECTIONS AND PROPOSALS TO RETURN TO A CULTURAL STUDIES PROGRAM IN BEIRUT

Ziad Suidan

Over the last five years, I have had the pleasure of teaching Intercultural Studies at Haigazian University. What I have been involved in is a Western Civilizational itinerary that has removed the qualitative difference of Cultural Studies. This is being done within the larger liberal arts framework governed by the leading force of American liberal arts universities. The Intercultural Studies courses have been shaped in their layout from ancient to modern times (from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* to *The Black Dog of Fate*) not as a set of courses shaped through cultural studies' dictates which began from two grounding concerns: one, a return to and questioning of the understanding of Marx's sense of capitalism through a base economic structure and a superstructural overwriting of labor's alienation; two, as a way to hear alternative voices, i.e. the working classes, minorities, those unhoused, un-citizened workers who have become seen only as burdens on a dysfunctional governing apparatus much indebted to austerity policies for everyone but the elites. The triadic constellation of figures—Marxism, feminism, and post-colonialism, now shifting to globalism— seem to be the last concern of Intercultural Studies. Rather than teaching students more than a regurgitation of content found on the world-wide web, we should be teaching students how to move from the steady stream and overreliance on information to a punctuated, effectively communicated critique of how one understands and lives and performs their cultural belonging.

In this set of reflections, I will be outlining what Western Civilization is, where it began, and what its intents were. In short, I will be outlining a program's history, a history which has

overwritten the way Cultural Studies is being taught. Then, I will give examples of how I have tried to punctuate that instructional process with a teaching method of rigorous critique between student and teacher that draws from the students how they are thinking of these issues in the present. I was educated within US liberal arts programs. These programs have aspirations toward global imperial reach that universities in Beirut seem willingly to take on. From the standpoint of that perspective, I want to arrest the process and promote not so much a technical, frozen set of mnemonic traits but an interaction with what is stimulating students in the curriculum as it stands and, perhaps, later on, reconstitute the program through cultural studies' priorities, which might return to an engagement within the seemingly archaic past, modern past, and recent past along lines where capitalism, feminism, colonialism, and global imperial and ecological studies take the foreground. We must prioritize learning which takes place within and outside the halls of academia rather than continually hitting on memorization skills, which students take on short-term. We should be training them through effective communication practices that can aid students in thinking through the stories and experiences that have shaped their learning curves. I will suggest means by which we can collectively work to listen to students, and the conversations they are having, and, through that, work those questions into the agenda of a revamped program of Cultural Studies. In an age where information is easily accessed by the reading public, we, as teachers, must help the students to question that Orwellian world of surveillance and speak through the concepts given to tell their stories, heard and lived, in order to question the limits of historical sets of selected readings and the imaginations they have been given. Orwell's Big Brother is upon us in a world run through information technology. Teaching cultural studies must punctuate it, making Orwell's writing but a warning of what might happen rather than something which is too deeply seeded to undo.

What is Western Civilization: A Dialectical Material Cover for Cultural Studies

As stated earlier, the program for Intercultural Studies has moved away from cultural studies formation and turned toward Western Civilization. It is a move that is perfectly in keeping with the neoliberal reordering of the political economic structure, one sector of which is the university and its pedagogical instructional models, which are largely top-down and based, not on discussion, but the digital outsourcing of thought to Power-point presentations. The program is becoming more a technical idea of specialist training rather than understanding the cultural import of the texts being read, how they are being selected, what parts of them are being prepared for consumption, what the institutional function of doing so is and, to my mind, the most critical part of cultural studies, the necessity for students to engage through their reading and emotional responses to the material and why it still has evocative resonance for them in the here and now.

By largely depending on teacher expertise and historical rendering of a text, we take for granted student potential. We assume differences between the high-school training of silent French acolytes who can write, the superficial thought in speech and writing of English-trained students, and the retrograde Lebanese education. This is putting a stamp on the flesh of the physical, thinking body of the student as a set imprint and is highly violent. The hegemonic pattern of high-school comes into the university and remains unchallenged. When teaching a broad requirement such as Cultural Studies with these assumptions, Western Civilization and its agenda can step in.

Western Civilization started, as a discipline, in 1921, at the end of WWI in the United States, which, not having gone through a war that devastated its landscape, projected the US into the position of the leading imperial power, which had dealt a devastating blow to Soviet Communism. The setup of teaching what civilization constituted was to uphold the legacy of Enlightenment, a largely Christian heritage after erasing the legacy of Al-Andalus, and assuming a linear progress of history from classical Greece, or perhaps a bit before, straight to the

present day. It was an imperial assumption that, from where the US was at the time, its values should dominate the landscape of reading progress, what constituted retrograde classical thought and what constituted the here and now. Never once has Western Civilization asked who or what class, race, gendered and linguistic assumptions shape this thinking.

Pedagogical Alternatives and Means of Returning to a Cultural Studies Approach

A programs, while easier than a department to reconstruct, is something that takes deliberate slow retraining of the imagination of the program and those who are being taught in it. The questions of translating context across the ages to relate the present reality of a text is critical. The terms "ancient" or "modern" should never come into it. Rather, those who think Plato is a figure of thought gone and dead, as I have heard in meetings, should ask what text Reagan's Secretary of Education in 1980 placed at the top of his list to educate students under neoliberal and global imperial paradigms. Well, the answer: the so-called *Republic*, which even a classically trained reader such as Thomas Jefferson, who could not read it except through its political mistranslation and then used that misunderstanding to claim that its signifying title aided in understanding US governance. But, why should a student care about the forgetting of Plato's *Politea*, "Constitutions," or as it has become known through its English title, *The Republic*? Why should a student think of *Antigone* when the empire of *Oedipus* is more conducive to consensual thought? Why should one care that liberalism forgot the revolutionary potential of women's resistance for a numbers game of statist belonging? In returning to these texts, we must ask how translation, and its unquestioning status, has shaped our thought; how government surveillance over our thought conscripts us to a cavernous death left unheard and un-mourned; or why modern liberal thought has commodified women's bodies and thoughts to statist, quantitative measures when they never had that status in classical measures?

More than two years ago, I got the shock of my life on hearing one of my colleagues say he was reading an article that began

with a quotation from Plato. The colleague asked why Plato's thinking still had relevance. Well, that reader had no training in contemporary philosophy or literary consideration. That reader had no knowledge of the ground unearthed in deconstructive logic when closely reading a text. In the one semester I taught IS203 I asked my students: what if Plato's *Republic* was actually in reality *Constitutions*? What difference would it make? It was just such a simply phrased question with huge implications that made the students say it was a question between a specific type of government and the mediating relationship between the government of whatever stripe and its citizens, its laws, the grounds upon which a state is governed, its relationship with its citizen subjects and who is a citizen. Well, if that does not give a contemporary difference to a so-called ancient text, I do not know what does.

So, I advanced a question very few people would even venture to answer due to their lack of comfort with deconstructive thought and what it can unearth in the present. What if the translation of the so-called *Republic* we have today had overwritten not just one cultural inheritance but two; and what if in overwriting two cultures the culture of presence became seen differently? Well, it was the Christian rule over Rome and its holdings that sought to give Plato a new shine. It called *Constitutions*, *The Republic*. Transforming the context for the book is also how they treated Arab culture and the Arabic language itself. The Arabs were the first translators of the classical Greek world; that admission may be known by some, but it only got World Wide Web support on Pegasus for literary and scholarly measure in the last ten years. The Arabs, indeed, translated the text correctly as *Dastour*, or *Constitutions,* in Arabic. Yet, most of my class had no idea that the Arabs were responsible for preserving the language of the Greeks. They had always assumed it to be European Christian inheritance that did this. But European Christian inheritance put the Greek inheritance under double erasure and cemented it by placing all Arab translations in monastery basements and cellars to collect mold and placed their minted translations in libraries.

So, a history of preservation and cultural inheritance began its marked history.

But how do we come to read Plato's "*Republic*"? We, in Intercultural Studies, several years ago decided for practical reasons to cut down the text. But it was anthologies like *The Norton World Civilizations Reader* that determined where those cuts were to be made. Like most anthologies, the cut was made to support national and imperial wills, thereby affirming the poor reading of Plato's legacy and never once introducing the relationship Plato's philosophy had to understanding how forms of governance legally established citizenship worth and constituted its relationship to those it would deem citizen-subjects. My students realized this and after putting it into play in discussion began to realize how a selection of a text, already built on a mistranslation, was guiding their understanding under institutional cover. How were their minds being molded by a program that does not realize the footing it is on, using the cover of expert or top-down teaching that then standardizes exams rather than allowing the imagination of the student to think through the mandate of reading while immersing itself in the translated world of those so-called ancient worlds?

If translation has been a major issue in reading and practicing cultural studies alongside its Western Civilizational double, so is the means by which we freeze-frame texts. One such example is *Antigone* by Sophocles. While *Oedipus* now has an Empire not just in the fetishization Freud unwittingly created but also in how it simultaneously stigmatizes studies of Freudian psychoanalysis, *Antigone* is kept at bay as the sort of text that needs to be quarantined to the past. Yet, not only did Hegel, that philosopher of nineteenth century modernity and the ethical dialectical movement toward the impossibility of progress toward the Absolute, base his sense of dialectical movement partly on moving past the fissure between family law and the state on Sophocles' *Antigone*. Also contemporary philosophy, feminist theory, and popular culture bombast has continued to sally forth with not only a trace of Hegel but also Freudian and statist political unconscious forms of a state of emergency. Judith

Butler, the feminist and now deep critic of Israeli apartheid, wrote *Antigone's Claim* (2002) to show not only how the classical text had suggested, in its imposition of a state of emergency, that suspending of family law prevented Antigone from continuing the law of family, which would have united a rent city state coming out of civil war, but also allowed state law, in the form of her uncle's recent decree, to sequester her in a cave where her dying, which her actions willed forward, would not be heard. So, a state of emergency, coming in the wake of a civil war, has brought together suspension of the past and its cultural rituals with mourning, or rather the political prohibition and absence of publicly practiced grief. Then, to draw on the power of the state of exception, one that has not just been visited upon the United States since 2001 but at many other times in its racist and classist history, Giorgio Agamben spoke about how the suspension of, the cancelation of law while waiting for a new law to come into being, was something contextually that would be visited upon the world. This is not only because of the US' imperial law on the global stage but also because of its power under the auspices of liberal arts' education, which is not only suffering austerity-promoted budget cuts but severe restriction to academic disciplinary integrity. Lastly, of course, that figure of publishing infinity, Slavoj Zizek, wrote an article a few months back which spoke of *Antigone*, character and play, as an example of toxic masculinity. But this toxicity is not generated by Creon's actions against his future and never daughter-in-law but by Antigone's will, which brought her fate to a conclusive present.

Speaking of toxic masculinity, the consideration of feminist histories, and classical drama, Nietzsche's assertive move in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) showed how the enlightenment, its attachment to masculine nationalism, and its masking of women's character in appearance and in teachable moments had turned women's voices from classical revolutionary vanguardism toward quantitative numbers. It is important to note that Intercultural Studies in Beirut forgets to include classical comedy, a form from which women in classical Greek times were barred because it did not uphold statist form but showed how betterment

might be achieved with or against the state's will. Thus, it doubled over the literary act of women's voice, which is Orientalized in Hanan Al-Shaykh's 1981 short story "A Girl Named Apple" and altogether forgotten in the selections from Simone de Beauvoir's phenomenology of silencing the woman by way of societal encroachment on her very will. But what surprised me and made me really see student potential at Haigazian happened a year and a half ago, when three women from the women's society on campus wished to defend and promote their advertisement for Dima Sadek's feminist mystique. At the start of class sessions on Nietzsche the three women, who had also believed feminism was simply founded on gaining equal pay for equal work and not on the entire socius of political forms of masculinity, brought a poster that commodified Sadek, already a commodity of beauty on the Arab media's air waves, waves not used to bring us news but to exchange her mind for her beauty to sell products promoting the news. They placed an angelic and soft photo of Sadek against a pink rosy background. They blew up this stance, promoting the physical while minimizing to the corner of the large poster whether, in fact, Dima Sadek could hold front and center stage against the masculinities surrounding the woman in the Arab world and on the commodified air waves. When the day of her arrival on campus finally took form, she arrived in a short skirt and high, sadomasochistic-heeled red shoes as if she were some youthful projection of Meryl Streep's performance in "The Devil Wears Prada" (2006). Meanwhile, as she strutted across the university courtyard, she got exactly what her commodified appearance suggested: adolescent male panting and shocked expressions from women of conservative religious bent. This was not a feminist moment but rather a time to witness the multiple forms of overlapping masculinity; the lines of waiting fans were around the corner, trying to get into the auditorium, a space which I have never seen 1/10 full unless for a mandatory attendance university function.

So, Nietzsche's critique of modernity as seen in the select pages of *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) was given without the role of Athenian Aristophanes' female vigor to interrupt the

proceedings under the guise of night. But then, a year before that, I had introduced to some feminist students in my class, a novel by Suad Amiry, the famed Palestinian feminist humorist who wrote the email lettered doubled occupation of *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* (2003). The novel's name was *Nothing to Lose but Your Life* (2009). In this novel, in the narrator's opening salvo the main character dresses up as a male Palestinian laborer and endures the humiliation of Israel's apartheid law, which decided a Palestinian's employment value even before the profit of the work that the Palestinian strived to do to put food on the plates of their family. This returns to Aristophanes' *Assembly of Women*, in which a group of agricultural women fulfill their division of labor status as wives—cooks of feasts and sexual delights—in order to drug their husbands into an ecstatic state of sleep, upon which they take their clothes and approach the senate to change the law which would be voted on that evening at midnight. Not only is this return to a classic comedy a reminder of a classical reversal and punctuation against a state of exception undertaken under the cloak of the night for the corporate will, but in Suad Amiry's narratorial feminist will, she has used drag to tell the story of Palestinian male torture under Israel's colonial rule of law.

Potential Reframing of Cultural Studies as a Whole

As I understand it, two decades ago, Cultural Studies used to have weekly meetings in which a lecture would be given to all sections of Cultural Studies to set the tone for the readings and discussions of the week ahead. While I cannot yet see this returning, it is my intention to promote it in my sections by calling on the faculty at Haigazian with specific knowledge, i.e., in Gibran and Lebanese Enlightenment studies, and personal and professional engagement with Balakian's novel *Black Dog of Fate* (1997). This will give the students a contemporary reading of these works, which can stimulate their interest and preserve the importance of some less well studied texts. I also seek to promote alternative contextualizing of our readings. For instance, Dean Ekmekji brought to my attention that Fairouz, the wonder of the Lebanese lyrical stage, had sung some of Gibran's *The Prophet*

(1923). This was a wonderful moment of counterpoint in revisiting some Lebanese-American cultural possibilities. But what is even more interesting is that Fairouz's rehearsing and reciting of Gibran was lyrical and not enlightening. The tone had been completely inverted and, in that inversion, suggested the reality under which Gibran might have evocative roles to play in cultural discourse today at Haigazian. But my main contribution to this course of alternative contextualization is to mandate that we stop putting historical freezing of texts first in Cultural Studies. I suggest that we introduce the students to a filmic reassessment of the contexts first. For instance, Marx in 1848 is not talking about de-industrial economies, and his *Communist Manifesto* (1848) is more critical today for its violent critique of capitalism, not its socialist revolutionary moves to communism. Moreover, it is a text that moves against the liberalized version given to us in selections of Adam Smith's 1776 *The Wealth of Nations*. We need to give the students a de-industrial reading of capitalism and ask what the potential of an international proletariat revolution is when today's laboring classes are mostly precariat and disaffected revolutionary voices across Facebook posts. In this section, I intend to suggest such a viewing to open the students to the contemporary value of the readings currently in the Cultural Studies repertoire and to show how they can vitalize and reenergize classroom discussion.

Two years ago, I came across three texts that, for different communities of the HU community, would recharge discussions where capitalism was concerned. These conversations would not take us back to an early stage of capitalism's development. This is critical due to the fact that the students should be asking how their already given working definitions of modern concepts, such as capitalism, feminism, and post-colonialism as well as globalization studies, share common ground with the material given while situated in a different time that has different precepts around which to concretely establish the living importance of the concept's worth. The first text for capitalism was written by one of Syriza's most famed defectors, Yanis Varoufakis. He was a professor of economics, who joined Syriza only to leave it when

it broke ranks with its popular mandate. He is currently in the Greek parliament heading a new party formation. He wrote a text called *Talking to My Daughter about the Economy: Or, How Capitalism Works—And How It Fails* (2013). From the title, one surmises that a professor of economics and well-known political figure is having to come down in the intellectual scale to introduce a most important topic. His daughter was a teenager, not much younger than many Haigazian students. Varoufakis even stated that his daughter was his fiercest critic. If something did not pass muster, then he would have to change it to be, as Communication Arts puts it, convincing to the "imagined" reader.

While I am not a parental authority, or at least I have never seen myself as such, my classroom is one based on an intimate interaction with my students to see when they are listening, what is turning them on, what strategies I am using that can make the text relevant to them. Varoufakis also did not use economy as a model by which to help his daughter learn about capitalism. He used literature to take his daughter through works she had read that were informed by capitalist principles, texts that are assumed to have more religious properties: Christopher Marlowe's drama *Dr. Faustus* (1592) and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Faust* (1829). These texts were interesting for Varoufakis because of the two means through which capitalism would come to be understood: Catholic eternal damnation and the Protestant thought of redemption and what that would entail. Given that context, the students would be reminded about the previous IS course that took them through religious and enlightenment discourses.

The second text that would be crucial for reshaping the students' understanding of capitalism was *J for Junk Economics: A Guide to Reality in an Age of Deception* (2017). In this text a famed economist of the last quarter century, Michael C. Hudson (not to be confused with the equally famous Arabist), carried out a study of US business schools that trained their students by Orwellian double-speak to understand capitalism and the political economy it represented. Business schools are not showing the violence of capitalism's war machine but rather are maintaining

a discipline for its status quo. C. Hudson's book is similar in type to Raymond Williams' *Keywords* text, which was so vital for cultural studies vocabulary; it reoriented the terms to real-world application rather than the fantasy that oftentimes academic life is swimming in. Coevally, I also discovered Ilan Ziv's six-part series on capitalism itself called "Capitalism" (2017). Among other things this series takes us through Adam Smith's, Ricardo's, Malthus's, and Marx's understanding of capitalism and asks not first and foremost about their work but about the worlds into which they were born and how those worlds shaped their own perspectives on what they saw or did not see. Smith's liberalism knew about slavery as a very important machinery of capitalism's imperial viciousness and barbarity. But, alas, not only are the selections of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) surrounded by the controlling synecdoche of the factory and its specialization, but Smith's corpus does not consider slavery or the viciousness of capitalism itself but rather the racist view of primitive and non-modern societies that could only be improved by business free-trade practices. Factories were fantastically described through their machinery, not through their alienating negative effects or the abject life of those whom it destroyed and de-socialized in the process.

When it comes to Marx's *Communist Manifesto,* it was not so much a critique but a refocalization that counted. Was the revolutionary potential Marx presented that of socialist and communist potential, as so many wish to point out, or the revolutionary destructive potential of capitalism as a global event of bourgeois wealth extraction and profit that turned its labor force into those who had to sell their labor or be criminalized by way of the stigma that came with poverty, or, perhaps both.

Another such unit within the IS205 section of Cultural Studies that I have done much to change with my own students is the understanding of feminism. In general, feminism is very poorly understood, and it often doubles back on previous stereotyping of gendered relationships that only affirm masculinities through miseducation. One way I have promoted an immersion into feminism and a potential extension of it in its second wave movements is through three movies. The first is Ibsen's *Doll*

House (1879) and its famed filmic adaptation in 1973. On seeing the movie, either at home or on campus, we saw how women had to play up expectations about themselves formed by way of class and gendered misconceptions. That playing up, when it reached an explosion, started opening up the melancholy caused by so much affirmation of power and degradation that a banking business and a home were brought to ruin. Then, I have the students watch the filmic adaptation of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1997), which recalled WWI and questioned whether British society had really become modern and woken up to its destructive technological affect upon the world. What we find is that the aristocracy had their leading women symbolically represent them through their swirl of parties and networking that prevented a coming to terms with WWI and the traumatic effects that were killing off its so-called war heroes. Women were only worried about maintaining a lingering Victorian image that was nothing but a cover for so much pain and pretense. The last film is Shirin Neshat's 2009 "Women without Men," which is a retelling of Iran's post WWII history from the standpoint of its women, the abuse visited upon them due to the patriarchal, matrimonial, and masculine power-structures brought from within and without Iranian modern life.

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CULTURE, CRITICAL THINKING AND SOFT POWER

Joseph Al Agha

> "The role of the historian isn't the search for truth, but the verisimilitude of truth – what seems like truth."
> Richard Bulliet

In this presentation, the author situates cultural studies within the dynamics of culture, critical thinking and soft power and discusses the symbiotic relationship and interdependence among cultural studies, popular culture, lifestyles, and cultural diplomacy.

Soft Power and Culture

The late renowned anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) conceived of culture in terms of power. He defined culture as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (Geertz, 89). Following his lead, the American social scientist Joseph S. Nye[34] defines culture as a set of values and practices that create meaning for a society; stressing that both high and popular culture are a source of 'soft power' (Nye, 2004: 44-45).

Nye coined the concept of soft power and distinguished it from the commonly used notion of hard power, which usually refers to the military and economic capabilities of a nation through waging wars or threatening to employ sanctions, as measures of the stick or carrot. According to Nye, soft power is different because it refers to the values and culture that characterize a nation and its people, 'the image it projects, and the expectations it generates,' and how these attract others in order to emulate these behavioral

[34] Nye served as dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, was an assistant secretary of defence in the Clinton Administration, and was a former chair of the National Intelligence Council.

patterns. Nye stressed that a country, or for that matter the international community at large, ought to lead through the exercise of its soft power, rather than traditional hard power (Nye, 1991). Nye argues that soft power "co-opts people rather than coerces them… It is the ability to entice and attract. And attraction often leads to acquiescence or imitation. Soft power arises in large part from our values. These values are expressed in our culture… soft power is more than just cultural power" (Nye, 2011: 6-11). Nye cautions that culture is only one of the resources of soft power; other resources comprise values, ideas, institutions, and policies (Nye, 2011: 21). The optimal combination of hard and soft resources results in smart power, which, according to Nye "is an evaluative as well as a descriptive concept" (Nye, 2011: 22-3).

Ibn Khaldun's 'Social History': A Precursor to 'Soft Power'?

Ibn Khaldun believed in the "soft power" of cultural heritage. Ibn Khaldun's social history produced a lively way of constructing and deconstructing history based on rational-intellectual thinking. As Emmanuel Kant admonished in bridging empiricism and rationalism: everything originates from experience, but a social scientist cannot form theory without resorting to reason. With this background in mind, Ibn Khaldun's meticulous transition from Bedouin to sedentary social formations has its toll on Western academia, where we notice great minds adopting this dynamic, an example being Ernest Gellner's pendulum-swing theory (Alatas, 2014: 45-6; 79-80; 84-5).

Well-situated in the literature are Ferdinand Tönnies seminal, though static-passive terms of 'Gemeinschaft' (community) and 'Gesellschaft' (society) as well as Weber's dynamic and active distinction between 'vergemeinschaftung' ('communitarization' – the process of community formation – and 'vergesellschatung' –the process of socialization). Unlike Durkheim, Weber's interpretive sociology merged social structures and institutions with meaningful human actions. These might be strikingly compared to Ibn Khaldun's salient distinction between Bedouin and sedentary social formations – and the shift from the former to

the latter. Another striking similarity to Ibn Khaldun's shift from Bedouin to sedentary structures is Robert Redfield's discussion of the one-directional pendulum swing from "folk society" to "urban society" (Redfield, 1964).

It is noteworthy that Ibn Khaldun's distinction between Bedouin and sedentary social formations has an important bearing on contemporary political and social philosophy. This foundational dynamic between Bedouin and sedentary might correspond to Isaiah Berlin's seminal distinction between "freedom to" and "freedom from." "Freedom to" or "positive freedom" refers to the freedom to do whatever one wants in the Bedouin state of nature without restraint, but within the narrow confines of the "harm principle", temperance, and self-actualization. On the other hand "freedom from" or "negative freedom" refers to freedom from external constraints or impediments that are imposed in Sedentary society, or *Civilization and Its Discontents*, using Freud's terminology.

In Ibn Khaldun, this might explain why the collective identity of *'asabiyya* (social bond, social cohesion, community cohesion) – or *Mitsein* (être avec, 'being -with' others) using Heidegger's terminology – is the strongest in Bedouin society because of the collective memory, shared consciousness, and strong coexistence among the members of the community. However, later on as civilization creeps in by way of the transition to sedentary society, luxury and extravagant lifestyles take hold of *'asabiyya*, weakening it and dismembering it, thus resulting in a gradual disintegration of the community and the destruction of the social fabric of the dynasty, which, as a rule of thumb, lasts for four generations (Alatas, 2013: 36-9, 55-71, 118-19, 142-47; Alatas, 2014: 22-4, 29-35, 41-2, 69-73, 88-98, 108-10, 125-29, 134-149). Nevertheless, unlike Heidegger's *Mitsein*, Ibn Khaldun's *'asabiyya'* contains no existential aspects; rather only social theory.

Cultural Studies: Storey's Popular Culture & Gramsci's Hegemony

Before defining what popular culture is, I would like to differentiate it from lifestyle. Anthony Giddens, who perceives lifestyles as "routinized practices," conceptualizes: "A lifestyle can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity" (Giddens, 1991: 81). He argues that contemporary lifestyle differentiations are no longer based on pre-modern concepts of custom and tradition but rather on a diversification of consumer products and individual consumption choices. Through an interplay between the global and local (the 'glocal')[35], "The more tradition loses hold, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options" (Giddens, 1991: 5).

John Storey[36] analyzed popular culture into six different categories: (1) "as culture which is widely favored or well-liked by many people"; (2) "as culture which is left over after we have decided what is high culture"; (3) as mass culture; (4) "as culture which originates from 'the people' "; (5) as a site of struggle between the 'resistance' of subordinate groups in society and the forces of 'incorporation' operating in the interest of dominant groups in society; and, most importantly, (6) "as postmodern culture which no longer recognizes the distinction between high and popular culture" (Storey, 2001: 5-14: Cf. Storey, 2014: 1-13).

The neo-Gramscian approach is important in the fields of postcolonial and cultural studies. From a neo-Gramscian perspective of cultural studies, popular culture represents "a site of struggle between the 'resistance' of subordinate groups in society and the forces of 'incorporation' operating in the interests of dominant groups in society" (5 above) (Storey, 2001: 11). As a social construction, popular culture is seen as a terrain of

[35] https://www.salzburgglobal.org/news/latest-news/article/glocal-what-is-global-and-what-is-local-in-todays-world.html .

[36] Emeritus Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Sunderland, UK, who has published extensively in cultural studies, including twelve books.

ideological struggle in which social norms and values are constantly being (re)negotiated, constructed, and reconstructed.

Thus, at the heart of this approach to popular culture as resistance, i.e. (5 above), are Gramsci's views on hegemony as self-serving ideologies propagated by the franchised to normalize and neutralize the disenfranchised. For instance, in our cultural studies courses, one objective is to study both the texts and discourses surrounding them as instances of the soft power dynamics deployed by different social forces in order to gain more visibility on the cultural production scene and what that entails for the meaning of culture itself.

To elaborate, in order to sharpen our understanding of popular culture, subculture, and media studies, Gramsci's concept of hegemony proves to be useful. Gramsci assumes that political power in modern capitalist societies consists in consensus rather than force (Femia, 1975: 31).[37] Consensus is based on the ruling elite's abilities to obtain cultural hegemony in order to impose a particular conception of the world on the majority of society. Cultural hegemony bifurcates into both (1) successfully propagating a particular set of ideas, attitudes, or opinions; and, more importantly, (2) establishing a dominant way of life based on particular norms of conduct. Foucault's concepts of institutional control and ideological incorporation are important ingredients to ensure hegemony. Thus, the struggle for hegemony is a dynamic process wherein the determinants of consent are constantly being socially constructed. (Barker, 2012: 66-70)

In addition to inspiring fresh thought on how political power is constituted in modern societies, Gramsci's work raised academic awareness for the role of individual action and thought within hegemonic discourse. Gramsci's view that "everyone is a philosopher" capable of "consciously and critically" working out one's own conception of the world continues to have a significant

[37] J. Femia, "Hegemony and Consciousness in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci", *Political Studies* 1975:23.1, pp. 29-48 (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1975.tb00044.x).

impact on the intellectual development of cultural studies and the study of popular culture (Barker, 2012: 482-5).

Cultural Studies & Critical Thinking: Eat, Digest, and Reflect

Critical thinking means actively setting out what is really going on, by carefully evaluating information, ideas and arguments – and thinking carefully about the process of thinking itself, i.e. thinking outside the box. Underlying critical thinking are the connected principles of skepticism and objectivity.

Skepticism entails not automatically accepting that something you hear, read or see should be taken at face value.

> Objectivity means trying to identify the facts of the situation as seen from the outside, rather than relying on your own – or someone else's – particular feelings or points of view.
>
> Uncritical thinking entails automatically believing what you read or are told without pausing to ask whether it is accurate, true or reasonable [plausible], e.g. fake news (Chatfield, 2018: 16).

The implication of the above discourse is that there are many impediments and obstacles to overcome before inculcating critical thinking in the minds of students, i.e. there is an urgent need to change the culture of doing things. How to overcome the difficulty of putting thoughts on paper, under pressure and at a specified time, especially during exams and assignments? How to effectively deconstruct texts while studying and reconstruct texts and study material during exams? Information Communication Technology (ICT) in education seems to suit the 'texting generation.' Use ICT in education to stress that, since we are humans, there is no total objectivity; there is always bias and prejudice. In spite of that, academic writing ought to be void of emotions and based on sharp insights and deep analyses. Employ a cultural shift – whereby the students learn to avoid impulsive answers – and inculcate the culture of 'Let me think about it.' Thus, there is a need to teach the students the following *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi*: first, to 'eat' the material, i.e. read

it carefully; second, to take their time to 'digest' it; third, to reflect analytically on it.

Educators need to teach Social Studies as a sort of 'cultural diplomacy', a "form of intercultural dialogue based on mutuality and reciprocal listening…Such attention to the specifics of intercultural dialogue can enrich our thinking about possible outcomes of cultural diplomacy programs, beyond the customary level of measurable 'impacts'",[38] thus employ social studies as a form of constructive soft power. As such, Cultural Studies could utilize cultural diplomacy as a strategic and cost effective tool for enhancing visibility and outreach as well as for motivating students to excel. By investing in arts performances, exhibitions, student exchanges, etc., cultural studies aims at building up mutual understanding and trust among people who are endowed with internal worth and dignity so they can exercise their agency and become active citizens who determine their future (Cf. Castells, 2004; Lenczowski, 2011). Thus, it is incumbent upon us to be not only teachers, but also educators.

As a symbiotic relationship, Cultural Studies instills Heidegger's *Mitsein* not only as a social bond – bond together, coexistence, national solidarity – but also as social cohesion, which is about acceptance of others. It is contextualized and changes across time and space. All of this is in order to reach community cohesion on the intra and intercommunity level, from within and without.

Conclusion

In 1887, Lord Acton cautioned, "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Power is without mandate, while authority is legitimate and grounded in the will of the people via a social contract. Power lacks peoples' contractual consent; it is the ability of a person or a group to exercise their hegemony. Authority is the inner order of a human association; it is power

[38] I. Ang, et al. "Cultural Diplomacy – Beyond the National Interest?" *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 2015:21.4, pp. 365-381; https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10286632.2015.1042474 .

legitimized by way of consent. In other words, authority is power that has been institutionalized via the constitution of the land that stipulates the rights and duties of the citizens. Thus, before Nye distinguished among the three types of power, power implied only one thing: hard power, i.e. military and economic capabilities. Soft power refers to the values and culture that define the country, the image it projects and the expectations it generates. Smart power is the best (optimal) combination of hard and soft components.

For the sake of argument, let us suppose that Einstein admonished, "I fear the day that technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots"[39] by limiting it to those who practice T. Veblen's "conspicuous consumption" (1994), for instance. In a world dominated by social media and fake news, education, based on critical thinking, is the best soft power tool with which we can equip our students. Cultural Studies contributes to giving students a rounded, balanced education. One of its aims is to raise a generation of critical minds, "eggheads", rather than 'tunnel-vision' students who excel only in their major and are quite ignorant about their surroundings and the world they live in. Athens executed its wisest man, Socrates, who said: "know thyself", i.e. know the limits of your knowledge and admit your ignorance, rather than being pretentious and claiming to know everything. Thus, we ought to encourage our students to exercise "positive freedom" in a discerning manner.

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[39] https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2929268/Was-Einstein-right-Physicist-said-feared-technology-surpass-human-interaction-photos-time-not-far-off.html .

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STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF INTERCULTURAL STUDIES COURSES

Gayane Madzounian

My Armenian origins had already dictated the first 18 years of my life: Armenian neighborhood, Armenian day school, Armenian scouts' movement, Armenian art school, Armenian friends… and the list goes on. By the time I was supposed to make plans for my future, reality hit me hard. I must go to university and sit in classrooms where I might be the only Armenian! What do you think one's initial reaction could be in such a scenario? To cut a long story short, I will tell you about my reaction. I packed my bags and fled the country. Yes. My fear of "the Other" took me to Armenia, where I imagined everybody else would be like me.

After long years of rich experiences, I came to the conclusion that "there are no two souls alike" and also, "we are all the same". Much later and back at a student desk at Haigazian, the Intercultural Studies courses confirmed my ambivalence.

Today, higher education has become another capitalist product whose consumption promises a front seat to life. Students purchase information in credits from institutions which shape them as professionals to fit the standards of other institutions. We are merely another product on the market unless we open up to the other. All specializations, even the ones in humanities, make of us experts in specific topics, narrowing our ability to think critically and leading us to evaluate our surroundings in terms of the label we buy for ourselves.

When a prospective student of Haigazian reads through the website of the university they come across its mission, which states:

Inspired by the Armenian Evangelical heritage and following the American liberal arts educational model, Haigazian University's mission is to promote academic excellence.

No student really asks what the liberal arts educational model is, and they expect Haigazian to get them closer to their paycheck as soon as possible. The big surprise is on orientation day when students are introduced to the general outline of their program of study, especially the section entitled "university requirements". Courses in English communication skills, science, religion and computer science and, of course, the famous trilogy of Intercultural Studies courses. According to many, all these are "30 credits of wasted time and money" because they are here to major in Business, Biology or Marketing, and they can read about those topics online if they want to.

Despite these constraints, for many of us in Lebanon, the university experience could be considered the first serious intercultural experience. Universities are the places where our much-romanticized mosaic of cultures comes together. Sitting next to each other, greeting that distant yet familiar face, listening to what a colleague has to say, having discussions and learning to entertain ideas we don't necessarily agree with. All these can happen in any course, but the IS courses are designed specifically with the above-mentioned in mind as objectives. Even the most resistant of students cannot deny the power of at least one topic from the IS courses having kept them awake at night, pushed them to question the obvious, and made them wake up with a broader horizon and more tolerance towards the unknown.

The three Intercultural Studies courses at Haigazian share their goals and some of their instructional objectives, from which I have extracted the following:

Goals:

- To broaden their [students'] visions, acquire civic consciousness and ethics.
- To develop empathetic understanding and tolerance towards other cultures and value systems.

- To support critical thinking, free discussion and awareness of oneself and one's environment.

Objectives:

- To apply ideas and methodologies to our contemporary world situation.
- To analyze and debate crucial ideas and problems of humanity.
- To explore the tools and skills that human beings have devised in dealing with their supernatural, natural, social and individual problems.

Although the 3 courses share these goals and objectives, apparently, they do not have the same outcome with students. After having many talks with students from different departments who have completed the 3 courses, a repeated concern rises to the surface. The clear majority of HU students draw a line between the first two courses and the third one. Many complain about the inability of the instructors to relate the ancient and classical topics to their reality, whereas the content of the third IS course (which covers major schools of thought in the 19-20th centuries) does that for itself. Somehow, Sartre's outlook on modern man's need to search for a meaning to his existence resonates more with students than Gilgamesh's search for that same meaning in 2000 BC. Many of the trailblazers of the 20th century were influenced by some idea we read in the first two IS courses, but unfortunately, students find it hard to make the connection for themselves.

Many students also highlight the large number of topics covered throughout the 3 courses. Genuinely interested classmates call for an opportunity to dig deeper in a selected number of topics instead of brushing through them just to complete the syllabus's requirements. The students I talked with, suggest the following: conduct a survey on campus and ask for the preferred IS topics of the students. Choose the 3 top picks and design specialized courses to be included in the list of free electives. This way, students who come across a topic of interest in any of the 3 courses will have the chance to spend a whole semester studying it.

On another note, since none of the goals and objectives mentioned above suggest treating the content as pure information, asking for its retrieval in the form of pure data contradicts what the syllabi state. In these courses, multiple choice examinations cannot authentically assess a student's achievement and development. For assessment to be aligned with the course objectives, students need to reach a point where philosophical ideas become a drive for their daily actions. Although not a student favorite, essays and papers (be they research or reflection) give us the opportunity to interpret the information through our own lenses, and thus, be convinced of the importance of IS in our program of study and our lives.

An interesting way of assessing student learning would be incorporating project-based or problem-based learning. Coming from the field of education, I suggest designing the content of each course around a problem that is highlighted at the beginning of the semester. Instructors could suggest several problems that exist at university, in a specific community or even on a national level, anything that engages the students and triggers their interest. Once students have voted for a problem, the course content could be shaped in a direction to find possible solutions to this problem. This way, any theories or any assigned readings could be studied having that problem in mind. At the end of the semester, students would have to come up with a solution to the problem, using the content of the course as a tool facilitating the performance of their project.

To wrap up my presentation, I would like to display some student reflections shared by Miss Anita Moutchoyan.

- I had never read a book in my life until the instructor started talking about "The Prophet". I went and immediately purchased the book and read it.

- Covering Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* left me in doubt about the destiny of our second half. As a male, I'm not afraid to call myself a feminist.

- Peter Balakian's *Black Dog of Fate* led me to dig deeper into my inherited pain and fear as a member of the third post-genocide generation.

- Before HU, I had no idea about the Armenian genocide. Today, I find myself defending the cause.

- I've always had separation anxiety and learned death in an inexplicable way, but in class, I was able to say "we are waiting for death" as a response to what Godot might represent. Upon saying that, I knew the moment was a defining one in my personal growth. I accepted my anxiety as being the non-gloomy anxiety of waiting.

- Major courses teach us "how to do things" whereas the IS courses teach us "why" do we do them.

Finally, in times where people seem to find shelter in extremes, the IS courses take us to that field beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right doing where we should all meet.

BIOGRAPHIES OF SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANTS

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Aghacy, Samira is a former Dean, Chair of Humanities and Professor of English and Comparative Literature at LAU. She has published numerous books and articles in international refereed journals such as the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, *Edebiyyat*, and *Journal of Arabic Literature*. She has also reviewed numerous articles submitted to international and Arab scholarly journals. Dr. Aghacy is a member of several professional organizations including the Middle East Studies Association (MESA), the Modern Language Association (MLA), the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES), and the Association of Professors of English and Translation at Arab Universities (APETAU).

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