



AN/PS330 SELF AND IDENTITY IN A POST-MODERN WORLD
IES ABROAD MILAN

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Being a “self” in this postmodern, new-liberalized world, as an emerging adult, while studying abroad presents an array of challenges for the development of identity. This course interrogates identity and self in the postmodern era of globalization and new liberalism. As we are increasingly globalized and connected, the traditional anchors of self and identity are losing their hold. This course explores some aspects of self and identity focused in particular on the construction of self and how the experience of emerging adulthood is modified through emotions, culture, experience and memory. Using a relational approach to selfhood, we will then explore different facets and contexts in which the self emerges, such as competence, passion, values, purpose, gender, race, spirituality, and interpersonal relationships. We will explore what it means to be authentic on the one hand, and, on the other, what sorts of representation society and we ourselves erect that can promote self-deception. The study abroad experience will provide useful examples by which to analyze the different theoretical and conceptual positions explored. Students will be expected to synthesize the different perspectives in an analysis of their lived experience.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: none

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

Lectures, discussion, group work, cinema, readings, student presentations

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Midterm exam - 25%
- Final Exam - 35%
- Class engagement - 10%
- Self and identity paper - 15%
- Class presentation - 5% (of self-identity paper)
- Movie Presentation - 10%

Midterm Exam

Short answer and essay questions, conducted in-class. The 3-5 short answer questions will ask students to explain concepts or historical trends discussed in the first half of the semester and to illustrate them with examples drawn from texts studied. The 1-2 longer essay question(s) will ask students to discuss recurring themes related to the learning outcomes of the course by drawing connections between multiple texts and supporting their thoughts with analysis of the individual in various social contexts.

Final Exam

Short answer and essay questions, conducted in-class. The 3-5 short answer questions will ask students to explain concepts or historical trends discussed in the second half of the semester and to illustrate them with examples. The 1-2 longer essay question(s) will ask students to discuss recurring themes related to the construction of self-identity, drawing connections between multiple texts and supporting their thoughts with analysis of personal experience during study abroad as well as introspective elements of one’s previous concepts, beliefs and sense of self.

Class Engagement

Active and thoughtful participation that demonstrates the student’s preparedness for class

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Self-Identity Paper and presentation

1200-1500 words. Students will be asked to choose among suggested themes that address key concepts about self-identity from



the course; they will be required to make and support an argument in response to the request using more than one text studied in class as well as at least one additional secondary sources. To help them prepare and develop their argument, they will be required to discuss their paper and its main thesis proposal in an in-class presentation.

Movie Presentation:

The movie presentation will consist of an analysis of a movie conducted in groups. Each group will be assigned topics from the course which will then be developed in the presentations.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- describe the self and identity in a sociocultural context;
- analyze the impact of social media and digital connectedness on the self and experience.
- analyze the notion of a “real” or “authentic” self in the context of the class readings and one’s own experience;
- analyze how worldwide migration, technological advances and exposure to multiple value systems can impact self and identity;
- be aware of bias and “cultural, ideological, or religious filters” in the interpretation of the self;
- explore the relationship between experience, culture, memory, and the self;
- analyze the impact of studying abroad on self and identity.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

As a member of our class community, you are expected to be present and on time every day. Attending class has an impact on your learning and academic success. The IES Abroad Milan attendance policy allows for the following number of absences, which are intended to be used for physical and mental health reasons:

- THREE (3) absences in each Italian language course,
- TWO (2) absences in each Area Studies course,
- ONE (1) absence in each seminar course or course meeting 1 day a week,
- ZERO (0) absences in each course of individual music instruction.

Every absence beyond this allowance will automatically result in a penalty of 2 percentage points off the final grade. SEVEN (7) absences will result in a failing grade in Italian language and Area Studies courses. FOUR (4) absences will result in a failing grade in seminar or 1-day-a-week courses. Failure to attend a scheduled exam, test, quiz, or presentation will automatically result in an F grade on that assessment.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students are expected to abide by the IES Abroad Code of Academic Integrity. All work submitted by a student for academic credit should constitute the student's own original work. Any work submitted for academic credit may be subject to review by a textual similarity detection service for the detection of plagiarism and AI usage.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Assignments
Week 1 Feb. 10	Introduction to Class • Syllabus & Course Overview • The context of “self” • Modernism, Post-modernism and beyond • Class discussion of Social Theories: their use, their specific points of view, impact for our daily lives	• Reading: Pip Jones’ Introduction to Social Theory. 28 pages.
Feb. 12	Identity in the Post Modern age • Social theories: Consensus, conflict, action • Max Weber’s four elements of “self” • Maslow’s Pyramid	• Assignment: Describe two situations one in which you belong and one in which you lack self-esteem

Week 2 Feb. 17	Emerging adulthood • Movie: Elephant by Gus Van Sant • Transitions: biological, cultural, identity • Discussion of assignment • In-class exercise: your motivation, your apathy	• Reading: Edward T. Hall's Beyond Culture: Chapter 1: The Paradox of Culture. 16 pages.
Feb. 19	Study abroad • Crossing cultures in the USA • Crossing cultures in Europe & and the World	• Reading: Rozzo, handout on Hall, Hofstede, Trompenaars, Meyer, Appadurai
Week 3 Feb. 24	The Digital Self • On-line presence • Virtual Self • Projected Self • Hidden Self • Damaged Self • Belonging / Self-Esteem on the Internet	• Reading: Edward Rozzo's hand-out PDF: The Digital Self
Feb. 24 (evening – 6.45-8.25pm)	Self-Awareness • Narrative Capital • Storytelling • Your Narrative: Narrative capital workshop	• Reading: Zygmunt Bauman's Liquid Modernity. 18 pages.
Week 4 Mar. 03	The Consumerist Self • Economic systems • FOMO • Self-Construction • Prestige • Luxury	• Reading: Anthony Giddens' Modernity and Self-Identity. 18 pages. • Assignment: Prepare THESIS proposal ideas
Mar. 05	Relationships and the Relational self • What kind of relationship? • Building relationships • Understanding relationships	• Reading: The Shortest Ultimate Guide to Dealing with Emotions. https://stevenchayes.com/the-shortest-ultimate-guide-to-dealing-with-emotions/ • Reading: Zadra, Clore, Emotion and Perception, The Role of Affective Information https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3203022/ • Reading: Anthony Giddens' Modernity and Self-Identity. 20 pages.
Week 5 Mar. 10	Emotions and Stories: how Emotions alter Perception • Anger • Shame • Doubt • Inadequacy • Anxiety • Fear • Present THESIS proposals	• Cheung, T. (2022). Alone but not lonely: the solo activities that help foster connection. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/aug/12/alone-but-not-lonely-the-solo-activities-that-help-foster-connection?acFviFes-that-help-foster-connecFon? • Selzer, N. (2008). The Power to be Vulnerable. Psychology Today. https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/evolution-the-self/200810/the-power-be-vulnerable-part-1-3 • Nussbaum, B. (2016) Beyond Anger. https://aeon.co/essays/there-s-no-emotion-we-ought-to-think-harder-about-than-anger
Mar. 12	Vulnerability, solitude, anger • Dealing with change • Accepting the Self	• Reading: Luigi Pirandello: One, No One, 100,000. Book 1.

Week 6 Mar. 17	Intersectionality - What is intersectionality? - Intersectionality in Pirandello - Midterm preparation	Reading: Timothy, R. K. (2019). What is intersectionality? All of who I am. The Conversation. https:// theconversaFon.com/what-is-intersecFonality-all-of-who-i-am-105639
Mar. 19	Midterm	
Week 7 Mar. 24	America The Individual in United States - The Project - Construction of - Mythmaking, rituals and struggles - Understanding the USA today	- Reading: James Baldwin's The Fire Next Time. 20 pages. - Yancy, G. (2015). Dear White America. New York Times, 24. https://archive.nytimes.com/opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/12/24/dear-white-america/?referrer=
Mar. 26	Race and the Self - What is race? - How do we define difference? - How to overcome stereotypes	- Reading: Berger, Introduction to Sociology. 27 pages.
Week 8 Mar. 31	Prejudice, autonomy, tolerance, and maturity - Deviations from national and personal myths - Ethnicity, assimilation, and upward mobility - Social understanding	Reading: Introduction to Sociology
Apr. 02	Social class, income and the Self - Class theory - Action theory - Class struggle - How much income is enough?	Reading: Piff, P. K., & Moskowitz, J. P. (2018). Wealth, poverty, and happiness: Social class is differentially associated with positive emotions. <i>Emotion</i>, 18(6), 902-905. https://doi.org/10.1037/emo0000387
Week 9 Apr. 14	Thesis Presentations In-class discussion of student papers	Thematic Paper Due in class
Apr. 16	Self-awareness Workshop - Your value - Your values - Your skills - Your passions - Your future	Assignment: Onboarding Narrative Capital - Narrative Capital Workshop part 2: Networking, Your Narrative, Your Social Media
Week 10 Apr. 21	Gender Identifying with the self	Reading: Introduction to Sociology, Chapter 8 - Feminist and Gender Theories
Week 10 Apr. 23	Authenticity and Self-Deception Discussion on self-perceptions	Reading: Introduction to Sociology
Week 11 Apr. 28	Narrating yourself - Which "YOU" do you narrate? - In-class presentations	

Apr. 30	Exam Preparation - Looking at yourself and others - Final Exam Review!	
	Final Exam	

REQUIRED READINGS:

- **BERGER**, Peter L. *Invitation to Sociology*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1963).
- **BAUMAN**, Zygmunt. *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).
- **GIDDENS**, Anthony. *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).
- **JONES**, Pip & Liz Bradbury, *Introducing Social Theory, 3rd Edition*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018).
- **HALL**, Edward T., *Beyond Culture*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1976).
- **PIRANDELLO**, Luigi, *One, No One & 100,000*, (Italia, Amazon, 2018).
- **BALDWIN**, James, *The Fire Next Time*, (New York: Penguin Classics, 2025).
- PLUS contemporary articles linked to various lessons.