

Studying the Globalised World

Guidelines for Teaching Intercultural Issues





FOREWORD

The inspiration for this project has been slowly coming along for a few years. I vividly remember the shocking feeling after one of my first Philosophy classes at high school during which I was introduced to Rene Descartes' idea that all I can know for certain is only that I myself exist. A further push into the curious action of doubting seemingly true ideas came from reading Friedrich Nietzsche and his denouncement of the existence of absolute values. These encounters opened up the gates to the world of critical thinking. Studying both philosophers helped me understand how fragile are the values and ideas I have been taught by my parents, my education system, and the historical narrative of my nation, and how shaky is their claim to absolute truth.

The five years as a Comparative Literature student at University of Glasgow exposed me to the rich variety of cultural theories, many of which I mention in the guidelines below. The various theories we discussed in our seminars opened my mind to the many ways we can think about cultures, and, most importantly, that there is no one simple and true theory that we could use to make sense of the whole world. My amazing professors revealed the rich differences between world-renowned scholars' ideas of understanding the world. But most of all it was the importance of perspective and the ability to produce critical arguments, that strengthened my conviction in the necessity of exposure and critical approach to contrasting ideas in education.

Having gone through an education system in a post-Soviet country before studying in a Western university, I have become a supporter of a critical approach to humanities and social studies instead of simply memorising dates and facts. This is the main reason why I have embarked on this project. I want to share ideas I personally wish I was exposed to while at school. This does not mean that everyone has to agree with thinkers or their theories discussed below; instead I would like to encourage everyone, but especially pupils and students, to approach various ideas and values critically. I believe we should not be afraid to question seemingly absolute truths and discuss problematic issues, even if they are quite controversial. Only when we question, for example, our countries' politics or our grandparents' views, we can not only arrive at an idea or value that we agree with personally, but also learn to understand and accept others' points of view.

Spending enough time on comments sections on on-line newspapers one might notice how important critical approach to information is in



the contemporary world. With the recent revival of nationalism in Europe and the divisive and hate-fuelled campaigns for Brexit and the American presidential elections I believe it is important to look at how we define nations and cultures. What are the arguments for thinking that 'we' (a national, ethnical, cultural or religious group) are better than 'others'? I would like to turn people's attention to the gains and losses from such a culturally and nationally divisional world-view. But most of all my aim is to encourage understanding and acceptance of all humans equally. We all deserve empathy instead of hate.

The guidelines owe their existence to the European Voluntary Service project 'East-West Bridges through Volunteering', implemented by Institute for Eastern Initiatives in Kraków, Poland. I was an EVS volunteer at IWI from March till November 2016. Thanks to Institute for Eastern Initiatives for the extra push I needed to start the project and for giving me a solid platform and framework for publishing and distributing the results.

These guidelines are aimed at all teachers of formal and non-formal education to provide inspiration for discussions in or outside the classroom. However, anyone interested is welcome to read the books and watch the films listed and take some time to reflect on the discussion questions, whether as part of an informal book or film club, or simply by themselves.

Guna Bełicka

STUDYING THE GLOBALISED WORLD

If you have ever been abroad chances are you have been asked 'Where are you from?' More often than not your answer does not only reveal your own personal identity, but also serves as a business card for your region, country, or continent, and the people you have left behind. Alternatively, by revealing your origins you are instantly categorised by stereotypes hailing from your culture: you are either cold, lazy, temperamental or tolerant. But can you as an individual truthfully represent a whole group of people, often counted in tens of millions? And does the collection of stereotype adjectives tied to this group characterise you as a person? If we take time to examine these questions, we can notice how fluid and blurred the seemingly strict borders between different cultures, nations and ethnicities are. This sort of categorisation becomes even more problematic when we consider an individual and their identity in the context of the culture they inhabit. As the world is becoming more and more interconnected, in order to avoid serious global conflicts and foster mutual acceptance and empathy towards people of various backgrounds, it is pertinent to gain a deeper understanding of how cultures and our perception of them have been constructed over time. Examining the underlying historical and sociological structures of societies reveal the differing values and attitudes they have towards the world. Understanding and accepting these differences provide undoubtable advantages in our globalised world, be it political, business or cultural relations between nations or simply friendships between individuals.



Why is it important to study foreign cultures and languages?

Linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf proposed the hypothesis for linguistic relativity, which states that the way humans make sense of the world is not universally objective, but instead influenced by the language(s) the individual possesses. A significant amount of research has been done linking language use with cognition. Here are a few examples:

English speakers prefer to talk about duration in terms of length (e.g., "That was a short talk," "The meeting didn't take long"), while Spanish and Greek speakers prefer to talk about time in terms of amount, relying more on words like "much" "big", and "little" rather than "short" and "long". Our research into such basic cognitive abilities as estimating duration shows that speakers of different languages differ in ways predicted by the patterns of metaphors in their language.¹

English likes to describe events in terms of agents doing things. English speakers tend to say things like "John broke the vase" even for accidents. Speakers of Spanish or Japanese would be more likely to say "the vase broke itself." Such differences between languages have profound consequences for how their speakers understand events, construct notions of causality and agency, what they remember as eyewitnesses and how much they blame and punish others.²

Thus, each language carries a specific way of understanding the world and influences individual's thought process, perception and categorisation of experiences. Of course, this is not a simple one-way process; language and culture can also be influenced by the physical surroundings of the society. However, this shows the enormous value of studying languages itself; a multi-lingual³ has the advantageous insight into the minds of people from different cultures. Understanding the way people think, make decisions and reason can lead to improved cooperation between individuals, groups or whole nations and minimise the risk of conflicts.

Unfortunately, there is a tendency, especially in the Anglophone societies, to assume people will be understood by speaking English anywhere in the world. Therefore, often education is focused on gaining other skills than acquiring foreign languages or deepening understanding of other cultures. In the United Kingdom, for example, recent years have seen reduced funding for modern language departments at universities⁴ and

1 https://www.edge.org/conversation/lera_boroditsky-how-does-our-language-shape-the-way-we-think [accessed 01.12.2016].

2 <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703467304575383131592767868> [accessed 01.12.2016].

3 Here I mean not only people who are native speakers of more than one language, but anyone who has embarked on foreign language learning, as even the smallest exposure to and understanding of a foreign language can go a long way.

4 <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/oct/09/university-language-departments-10-things-to-know> [accessed 01.12.2016].



abolishment of school leaving foreign language exams.⁵ Such actions can have dire consequences even threatening global security.⁶ Jan Čulík, professor of Czech at the University of Glasgow, provides a well-argued summary of reasons why language learning is important, especially in the Western world.⁷ He notes that 'information flows from West to East. Western politicians think that everything can be understood from the Western, mainly Anglo-Saxon point of view.' This has, for example, led to mistakes in handling peace-keeping missions in problematic Middle Eastern war zones, as Westerners 'do what they think is best for these societies without bothering to understand them'. Similarly, by accepting former Soviet and Eastern Bloc countries into the European Union in 2004, the West let off its guard assuming the so-called European values would be adhered to automatically by all new member states. This failure to understand the values of Eastern European societies has manifested in the deep chasm between the Eastern EU and Western EU societies' reactions to the European refugee crisis. Such short-sightedness and the lack of knowledge about former Soviet countries' cultures and ideologies has strongly destabilised the strong bond supposed to unite the EU member states. In order to fight misinformation Čulík stresses that 'literature and the arts are a potent strategic medium whose analysis should be able to discover under what myths societies are labouring, and to enable politicians to compare intercultural notes. And with the knowledge of the subtleties of local cultures, to avoid misunderstanding.' Therefore, understanding foreign languages and cultures is a necessity, not only to avoid misunderstanding in private lives, but to minimise conflicts on a global scale; learning about the ways societies operate can lead to greater success in cooperation, whether it is business, cultural or political partnerships.

5 <http://schoolsweek.co.uk/tristram-hunt-calls-for-action-to-stop-languages-being-axed-from-gcses-and-a-levels/> [accessed 01.12.2016].

6 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/feb/20/uk-guilty-of-catastrophic-misreading-of-ukraine-crisis-lords-report-claims> [accessed 01.12.2016].

7 <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/multilingual/0/steps/12504> [accessed 14.11.2016].



Why are people divided and categorised into national groups?

The recent rise in nationalist tendencies around the globe has shown that a deeper understanding of other cultures is absolutely necessary in order to retain peaceful coexistence and tolerance between people. The Brexit leave vote, Donald Trump's American election campaign and the rhetoric of right-wing politicians in EU have aimed at dividing nations into 'us' and 'the others'. Such campaigns as Nigel Farage's vote leave poster depicting migrants crossing Croatia-Slovenia border⁸ has managed to dehumanise migrants and their experiences. Such fear- and hatred-fuelled rhetoric manifested itself in soaring statistics of racially, ethnically and nationally motivated hate crimes in the United Kingdom⁹ and United States¹⁰ after the Brexit vote and US elections respectively. Underneath these hate crimes lies a hierarchal view of people, an idea that some are worth less than others and, therefore, have less rights to work or live in a place that does not historically 'belong' to them. Such ideas obstruct the progressive move towards egalitarianism, equal treatment and empathy for all human beings despite their race, class, gender or nationality. Undoubtedly, an influential way to foster mutual understanding and acceptance is through education with emphasis on language and culture learning. Through examining the driving forces behind various cultures and their individual representatives we will be able to work towards eradicating hate-fuelled crimes and culture clashes.

However, language and culture learning should not stop at merely getting acquainted with the differences between cultures, instead teachers should further dissect the underlying notions of what makes up a culture and nation, and to critically assess the reasons why such segregation of people exists in the first place. For example, nationalism for many provides an easy guidance on where to draw the border between 'us' and 'them', how to categorise individuals, even how to tell apart the 'good' from the 'bad' people. One of the most compelling overviews of nationalism is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) in which the author examines the skeleton of this ideology. According to Anderson, the origins of nationalism can be found merely 200-300 years ago and owe its rapid expansion to the technological advancements of the printing press. The switch from Latin (the official church language among the higher classes, but rarely used by the lowest ones) to regional vernaculars in newspapers and novels, combined with the newly acquired ability to distribute these materials more rapidly across territories due to innovative printing technologies, made news and ideas more accessible among language groups. Firstly, reading the same texts in a particular language exposed people to the same ideas and fostered a feeling of connection between individuals. Secondly, the perspective a reader has towards a novel is like God's perspective, both observe actions from 'above', thus, providing a

8 <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/eu-referendum-poster-nigel-farage-polls-michael-gove-a7089946.html> [accessed 21.11.2016].

9 <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/oct/13/hate-crimes-eu-referendum-home-office-figures-confirm> [accessed 21.11.2016].

10 <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-37945386> [accessed 21.11.2016].



wider understanding of the big picture of actions, events and people's lives as in encapsulated in a specific time-frame. This new type of perspective then allowed people to imagine their own nation as an interconnected group of people living their lives in a specific place and time. Lastly, the ritual of reading a daily newspaper similarly provides a feeling of connection, since the same newspaper is read by millions of people at the same hours, for example, while drinking the morning coffee. This knowledge assures an individual that the group of people he/she shares a language with is a solid community, a united nation.¹¹ Thus, Anderson argues, nations are imagined, constructed societies 'because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the lives of each lives the image of their communion.'¹² This imagined connection, then, is what leads people to fight and die for their nation.

Furthermore, there are categories that override national borders, but work in the same way as nationalism in uniting (as well as segregating) people into 'us' and 'them', such as religion, socio-economical class, political beliefs or specific personal values. If we consider the 18th century, for example, it is fair to say that a Russian peasant has more in common with an English peasant than with a Russian monarch. According to Anderson, the illusion of nationalism portrays the nation as a horizontal and equal group of people, however, among them there is often a vertical hierarchal system.¹³ Individuals of the same nation come from very different social classes, educational and financial backgrounds, this influences their social mobility and the space they take up in the society. Thus, the group of people that is called a nation is not a homogenous, egalitarian society moving towards a unanimous goal as devoted nationalists would like to believe. There is a stark difference between a nation and an individual. Although many representatives of one nation might aspire for the same goal and share a patriotic feeling towards their land, it is not the case for everyone in the particular nation. If we look at the Polish nation, for example, which is often presented as deeply Catholic by default, it is not particularly hard to meet a self-described 'true Pole' who is also an atheist. Therefore, by accepting certain values and ideas to be inherently true about a specific nation, we imagine them to apply to all members of the community, however, we can always find exceptions that show the ambiguity of imagined national borders. Overall, *Imagined Communities* is a good start for exploring the underlying constructions of nations and the reasons people are devoted to this ideology.

In addition, categorising people into national groups conflicts with the individual's right to self-determination, especially when we consider the fluidity of cultural borders and identities. The borders we draw between 'us' and 'them' are forever changing and dependent on our own (imagined) descriptions of who these 'us' and 'them' are. These borders can be shared by many of the same nation, however, ultimately they are individual and subjective, as is our self-ascribed identity. Self-determination is a human right and as such should be a free choice

¹¹ Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), pp. 24-36.

¹² Anderson, p. 6.

¹³ Anderson, p. 7



without external compulsion. An individual from London, for example, should be free to identify himself/herself as English, British, European, any of these or none, but often the relationship between identity and culture is not this simple. In her book *Nobody's Home* (2007) Dubravka Ugrešić talks about the problems that arise from extraneous labelling of writers' works with their national identity.

[T]he luggage of identification bogs [literary texts] down. [...] labels actually alter the substance of a literary text and its meaning. [...] Moreover, the label opens up room for reading something into a text that is not there. And, finally, [...] the identifying label discriminates against the text.¹⁴

Her argument can be expanded to labelling individuals as well. Our national identity often overrides our personal traits and is seen as a reason and excuse for our actions. In extreme cases a person so adherent to the idea that a national identity is our most important identity might think that they know how an Italian, for example, will act and react before ever meeting this person. They might even hate this person without having had any contact with them simply because their countries have been at war in the past. This is an unfair categorisation that can lead to painful and pointless misunderstandings and conflicts.

The problems with national categorisation become more explicit when considering people of mixed heritage. In the contemporary globalised world travel and exchange of information are becoming exponentially faster and crossing geographical borders easier. There are people having two or more 'homes' (cities, countries, continents), or national and cultural identities. With the free movement agreement among European Union states it is not hard to meet individuals identifying themselves as European instead of a specific nation from within the EU. These can be people whose mother is French, but father - English, children of Estonian parents born and raised in Spain, or a Greek family wilfully relocating to Norway, because they simply feel more at home there. However, such fluid identities are not isolated to Europe only.

It is unfair to forcefully subject an individual to a single national or cultural identity against their will. The right to choose an identity should be respected, taking into account not only the individual's ethnic composure and cultural background, but also their free will and choice to move through different geographies and change in the process. Of course, people often seek belonging, but instead of forcefully subjecting individuals to a specific identity according to their blood or birthplace, we should work on relaxing our attitudes towards the concept of national and ethnical belonging altogether. It should be acceptable to come from more than one place, or to have no 'home' at all.

¹⁴ Dubravka Ugrešić *Nobody's home : essays*, trans. by Ellen Elias-Bursać, (London: Telegram, 2007), p. 168.



Who tells the story and why?

Another important part of understanding cultures is being critical of the source of information. Representation of different cultures in the media, for example, deeply influences the way individuals coming from these cultures are treated in a foreign society. Edward Said's examination of the Western world's perception of the Middle East in *Orientalism* (1978) shows why it is important to be critical of information we are being exposed to, and who and why is providing this information. He considers the way people in the West perceive Arabs: stereotypically as exotic, less educated, possibly even terrorists.¹⁵ The historiography of studying the territory labelled as the Orient¹⁶ has been saturated with scholars' works describing the Islamic culture from the outside and primarily from a Western perspective. But how often are Arabs themselves given a voice? Sure, in the media we see pictures of people from the Middle East, sometimes they are interviewed, but the news stories are mostly told by Westerners for Westerners, filtered through a Western point of view. Unless we explicitly seek out varied sources of information we, Westerners, might feel like we know the truth about the Arab condition, but what we actually get to know is just a Westernized interpretation of it. Therefore, when learning about cultures, it is crucial to critically examine the source of information and seek out a less mediated access to the cultures in question.

The Danish newspaper *Dagbladet Information* successfully subverted the Westernised and stereotyped view on the European refugee crises in October 2015, when a whole Friday issue was composed by refugees recently settled in Denmark.¹⁷ Instead of the Danish *Dagbladet* journalists reporting on the issue, the newspaper's board decided to let refugees, who have been professional editors and journalists in their home countries, completely take over a full newspaper issue and tell their own story. This allowed the readers to gain a less mediated access to the topic, and with positive outcomes. As the paper's former editor Lars Hadegaard noted: 'I expected a great deal of whining and complaining and sobbing, but ... reluctantly I must admit that there seems to be somewhat higher standards than when I was editor.' Of course, this does not always mean that the most unmediated source will definitely be the most truthful and objective, however, it is important to critically evaluate the implications author's background have on the story in question, be it a film, a book or a news report. This can also reveal how objective is the information or whether it serves as propaganda for a specific ideology or group of people.

Additionally, when striving for equal representation, it is important to give voice to marginalised groups to empower their ability to influence their

15 <https://www.thenation.com/article/islam-through-western-eyes/> [accessed 23.11.2016].

16 Here Said concentrates on the Middle East and the Islamic world, however, for different academic fields the Orient can enclose territories from the Mediterranean all the way to Japan. This problematic labelling reinforces Anderson's point for imagined communities and geographies being a man-made construction instead of something actually existing outside one's mind. (Edward W. Said *Orientalism*, (New York: Vintage, 1978) pp. 4-5).

17 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/09/refugees-take-charge-danish-newspaper-dagbladet-information> [accessed 01.12.2016].



surroundings politically and culturally. An important writing in this field is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in which she discusses extremely marginalised groups' ability to speak and be heard. Spivak notes the depth and breadth of the subaltern itself. For example, Indians are considered as a group of marginalised victims of the British imperial rule, however, we should also remember that Indian women have less power than Indian men inside and outside their patriarchal society. 'If, in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.'¹⁸ Spivak shows the importance of understanding the intricacies of power struggle both inside and between cultures, as even when a well-wishing Western scholar, for example, aims to reveal inequality of very marginalised groups, he/she is still representing a group that has no voice of its own. Therefore, we hear the scholar 'speaking' instead of the subaltern, and as such we are still exposed to the scholar's interpretation of the information. Both Said and Spivak's writings are essential in understanding the importance of the source of information and how the story is interpreted. This bears significance when we learn about cultures, especially from various art forms such as literature, film or painting. By knowing whose story (or interpretation) are we encountering we can see through stereotypes and actually be able to make a deeper connection with the people we are interested in. Additionally, both Said and Spivak's works have immense worth for getting acquainted with the fluidity of cultures and their representation.

To recap, studying cultures and languages has an undeniable merit for both personal growth and use, as well as for tackling global inequality, promoting humanitarian values and establishing safe and trustworthy relations between cultures and nations. A potent way of learning about the foreign is through art, literature, and films. However, simply looking at stereotypes regarding a certain culture will not eradicate these stereotypes. It is important to remember that categorising people into cultural, ethnical and national groups is largely based on imaginary borders that segregate people into 'us' and 'them', which in turn can lead to hate-fuelled speech and action, and further division. Additionally, nationalism undermines an individual's freedom for self-determination and full exploration of their own identity. In order to gain a more unmediated access to people of various cultures students should get as close to them as possible, which means a close study of the underlying constructions of the culture, as well as a critical examination of the source of information.

¹⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (Routledge, 1995), pp. 28-37 (p. 32).



GUIDELINES

Here you will find a few ideas for workshops and classes constructed around intercultural issues. As a teacher or trainer you can use all of the material provided or pick and choose a few questions for discussion in class or as homework for an essay. These films and books can also be incorporated into other subjects like history, for example, *Papusza* discusses Poland during and after World War II, whereas while reading *Persepolis* students can study the recent history of Iran.

If you are running a discussion club or a society for book or film lovers, there is something for you too! The films *Mediterranea* and *La jaula de oro* touch upon the topical issues of migration, while *Wadjda* and *Mustang* reveal the pressures faced by women in Muslim societies.

Even if you are reading this by chance, I hope you will find inspiration to pick up one of the books or films and discover something new.

So keep an open but critical mind and delve into exploring the foreign 'other'! Maybe it is not so foreign after all.



PAPUSZA

Dir. Joanna Kos-Krauze, Krzysztof Krauze - Poland 2013

THEMES: CULTURE CLASH – MINORITIES – CULTURAL IDENTITY

DESCRIPTION:

Papusza follows the life of a Polish-Romani poetess and singer Bronisława 'Papusza' Wajs (1908-1987), who was one of the first ever known and published Romani authors. This is a biographical story and depicts real historical events. The film has many points to consider relating to treatment of minorities in Poland, particularly Romani, the relationship between an individual and their community, as well as culture clash between differing communities and their values. The film focuses on the struggles of a primarily nomadic community subjected to change by Polish authorities. Romani are forced to settle down, forbidden to play instruments and earn money the traditional way they have been doing for centuries. The acceptance of an outsider into this closed community unsettles the status quo and brings in fresh ideas and change, especially in Papusza's life. However, the community is torn apart by a conflict arising from the orthodox Romani values and the inability to control their fate as a collective.

DISCUSSION:

- What are the differences between Romani and Polish communities depicted in the film?
- What can you tell about the treatment of women in the film? How deeply is the attitude rooted in the Romani society?
- Consider the differing attitudes towards reading and writing and their significance to memory of the nation. From the Polish (Western) point of view the nation has to know (and love) its past, while for Romani the past is an unwanted memory forced upon them. Is the action of giving Romani a past (through publishing Papusza's poems) mentally violent towards them? Do you think it is a patronising/colonising/Westernising action?
- Consider the culture clash surrounding Jerzy's book: from Jerzy's point of view, his book is of purely academic value designed to enrich the world of knowledge, while for Romani the book is a betrayal of their secrets. Can you agree with any of the sides? Does a community have rights not to be studied and have their secrets revealed?
- Why is Papusza banned from Romani society? What does it reveal about the hierarchy of the Romani society? If Papusza was from your community, how would your community treat her now? What about 100 or 200 years ago?
- Who tells the story? Whose is it to tell? Think about Jerzy's book, is it Romani themselves telling their story or is it an outsider's interpretation?
- To what extent is Papusza in charge of her own actions? To what extent is she a victim of the society or her own community?



- The film depicts events in Socialist Poland. Do you think much (or anything) has changed in the treatment and understanding of Romani people in Poland/your country? What kind of stereotypes surround Romani communities and are they true? Are Romani fairly represented in contemporary society? Are they represented in academia?

TIPS FOR WORKSHOPS:

The workshop can consist of simply watching and discussing the film. However, to focus more on Papusza, the teacher can introduce the class to the writer's biography and poems after the film. For a more literary approach participants can analyse Papusza's poems and/or compare them to poems from their own countries.

MATERIALS:

Papusza (2013, dir. J. Kos-Krauze, K. Krauze, Poland)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2719094/>

Jerzy Ficowski *Pieśni Papuszy. Papuśakere gila*, (Wrocław, 1956)

<http://romowie.com/>

<http://culture.pl/en/artist/papusza>

<http://rombase.uni-graz.at/cgi-bin/art.cgi?src=data/pers/papusza.en.xml>

<https://www.amazon.com/Gypsies-Poland-History-customs/dp/8322323212>



WADJDA

Dir. Haifaa Al-Mansour - Saudi Arabia 2013

MUSTANG

Dir. Deniz Gamze [Ergüven](#) - Turkey 2015

THEMES: WOMEN'S RIGHTS – ISLAM – TRADITION VS. MODERNITY

DESCRIPTION:

Wadjda is a 12 year-old Saudi girl who enters a Quran recital competition at her school to win money for a green bicycle she passes every day on her way home. However, in Saudi Arabia it is not acceptable for a girl to ride a bicycle. In the backdrop Wadjda's mother is going through emotional period as her husband is planning to marry another wife. The film depicts the everyday life of Saudi women, the intricate shift in inequality as girls mature and the stark gender roles ingrained in the society.

The Turkish film *Mustang* follows the lives of five teenage sisters. After being caught playing innocent games with boys, the girls are punished by their conservative relatives. They are imprisoned in their own homes and one by one married off to suitable candidates. The film explores a clash of generations in an Islamic world. The relationship between the girls and their grandmother is particularly interesting when considering life in a patriarchal society.

DISCUSSION:

- What are the differences between treating men and women, and boys and girls in the films? Why? What are the similarities and differences with your own culture?
- How much of the status of women can be attributed to the religion and how much – to tradition? Do you think traditional and religious views are closely intertwined with each other? What about your own culture?
- What can you tell about women's place in the societies depicted in both films?
- Who is telling the story? Bear in mind that both directors are women from Saudi Arabia and Turkey, who have studied and worked in the West. Do you think their storytelling is more truthful than if the films were made by male directors or foreign female directors?
- Do women in your society face such restrictions in both public and private life? How much is it because of traditional values, religion or patriarchy? Is there a strict difference between these ideas?
- What is the situation with Muslim women in your country? Do they face similar limitations in public and private life?

TIPS FOR WORKSHOPS:

These films can be discussed together or separately.

MATERIALS:

Wadjda (2013, dir. H. Al-Mansour, Saudi Arabia)
<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2258858>



Mustang (2015, dir. D.G. Erguven, Turkey)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3966404>

<http://the-toast.net/2016/01/15/an-interview-with-deniz-gamze-erguven-on-her-feminist-fairytale-mustang/>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/haifaa-al-mansour-interview-saudi-arabias-first-female-film-director-talks-about-new-release-wadjda-8717438.html>

EVA HOFFMAN

LOST IN TRANSLATION

1990

THEMES: LANGUAGE – IDENTITY – MIGRATION – EAST VS. WEST

DESCRIPTION:

Lost in Translation is a linguistic memoir by Eva Hoffman who emigrated from Poland to Canada at the age of 13. The author looks back at her childhood in Poland and her troubles with getting used to the new life in Canada and professional career in America. The memoir is a detailed examination of embracing new culture and new language and the change an individual's identity goes through as a result.

DISCUSSION:

- How does Hoffman describe Polish and English languages? How do these languages correspond to her memories of places?
- How have Polish and English languages influenced Hoffman's identity?
- What does Hoffman say about being Jewish/Polish/American? Does she have separate multiple identities or is she Polish-Canadian at the same time?
- What does 'living in translation' mean?
- Do you speak many languages? What is your relationship to them?
- What stages of integration does Eva go through? Think about her arrival in Vancouver, her college and university years in America and her professional life in New York. Does she integrate fully into Canadian or American societies? What about her parents and sister Alinka?
- Is it possible to fully integrate into foreign societies? Are there advantages and disadvantages of integration? Think about one's language and cultural heritage. Do they suffer or instead are they enriched from moving abroad?
- How can individuals retain their identity when living abroad?
- What is the connection between memory and identity. Think about it in a cultural sense. Does it apply to nations too?

MATERIALS:

Eva Hoffman *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*, (London: Penguin Books, 1990)

Eva Hoffman *Exit into History: A Journey through the New Eastern Europe*, (New York: Viking, 1993)



INSTYTUT
WSCHODNICH
INICJATYW

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/apr/28/internationaleducationnewsocialsciences>



MEDITERRANEA

Dir. Jonas Carpignano - Italy 2015

THEMES: MIGRATION – REFUGEES – CULTURE CLASH

DESCRIPTION:

Mediterranea follows two Burkinabe friends Ayiva and Abas on their dangerous journey through North Africa to Italy. In the small Southern community both men make ends meet working illegally on an orange farm. They spend their time with fellow African immigrants, they have fun, they worry about the future, they fight everyday racism.

All characters in the film are played by non-professional actors with migrant backgrounds, whom the director has met in the small South Italian community. They replay episodes from their own lives, making the film balance on the border of documentary.

DISCUSSION:

- What choices do the immigrants have to make to survive? Do you think they differ from choices Europeans would make?
- What sort of culture clashes are portrayed in the film? Can these problems be resolved? How?
- How is the story told? Does it portray Ayiva in a positive or negative light? Why?
- What would you do differently if you were in Ayiva's place?
- What are the differences between Ayiva and Abas? What expectations do they have for their new life in Europe?
- What do you think happens to the characters after the ending of the film?
- Compare the film to news stories of refugees travelling to Europe. Does the film influence the way you perceive their experiences?

MATERIALS:

Mediterranea (2015, J. Carpignano, Italy)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3486542/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vez4an5_7o

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_ELgxaiTS4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qFRKRN-Xxw>



LA JAULA DE ORO (THE GOLDEN DREAM)

Dir. Diego Quemada-Diez - Mexico 2013

THEMES: MIGRATION – LANGUAGE – HUMAN TRAFFICKING – CULTURE CLASH

DESCRIPTION:

Three teenagers from Guatemala city slums try to escape poverty and reach the dreamland America. While crossing the Mexican border they befriend an Indian boy who does not speak Spanish. Together they continue the dangerous journey encountering the police, border patrol, human traffickers and criminals.

The director Diego Quemada-Diez based the film on around 600 migrant stories. The film is a testimony to migrants' perilous journey towards prosperity through the eyes of children. The film also shows the multi-layered composure of the Guatemalan society, both linguistically and ethnically.

DISCUSSION:

- What are the cultural and ethnic differences between the teenagers? Do Mexican/American border guards and smugglers notice these differences?
- What are the language barriers in the film? What are the differences between Tzotzil and Spanish? Is there a hierarchy between the languages spoken? Why?
- What national borders are deconstructed in the film? Think about the geographical borders between Guatemala, Mexico and America, as well as the cultural borders between indigenous Guatemalans, Guatemalans, Mexicans and Americans.
- How does Juan and Chauk's friendship evolve? The director suggests to view this as a parable of the relationship between indigenous tribes and colonising powers. Why?
- What internal and external journeys do the teenagers take?
- The original title in Spanish means 'the golden cage'. What do you think that means?
- What do you think are the reasons for the teenagers leaving Guatemala and heading to America? Do you think they reach their goal in the end? Is the journey worth it?
- How can you interpret the last scene?

MATERIAL:

La jaula de oro (2013, D. Quemada-Diez, Mexico),

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2042583>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrDgSDWpTuw>

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2013/may/23/golden-cage-jaula-de-oro-review>

<https://geographyas.info/population/mexico-to-usa-migration/>

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/central-american-immigrants-united-states>





MARJANE SATRAPI**PERSEPOLIS****2000**

THEMES: ISLAM – CULTURE CLASH – WEST VS. EAST – WOMEN'S RIGHTS – IDENTITY VS. SOCIETY

DESCRIPTION:

In her graphic autobiography the artist Marjane Satrapi recounts growing up with Iran's history in the background. The childhood memories are intertwined with the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the following clamp down on citizens' liberties. After the war with Iraq breaks out the family fears for their safety and sends Marjane to study in Vienna. There she is challenged by incorporating her Iranian identity into the European way of life. In Austria Marjane goes through puberty, meets new friends and even love. After 4 years she returns to Iran to find the country changed by war and oppressive ruling of Khomeini.

Marjane's journey shows the change of one's cultural and religious identity while growing up and encountering events, over which one has no control. The character's development is challenged and influenced by adapting to new life abroad and later re-adapting to life in her homeland. The novel also gives a humane face to political and historical events, showing the tragedies people live through in the name of higher political ideologies.

DISCUSSION:

- What is Marjane's relationship with her native country Iran? How does it change as she reaches adulthood? What about the political and religious institutions?
- What is the relationship between men and women in Iran? How do women's rights change after the revolution? Compare Marjane's family to other families in the novel.
- In what ways does Marjane's identity as an Iranian change as she grows older? How much influence does living abroad have on her identity?
- What are the difficulties Marjane encounters in Austria?
- What are the cultural differences between Marjane and teenagers in the West?
- What are the cultural differences Marjane notices after her return to Iran? In what ways have her views become European? In what ways has she retained her Iranian values?
- Where is Marjane's 'home'? Is it Europe or Iran? Can a person have two 'homes'? Why?
- How does a change in political regimes change the culture? Can oppression change culture at all? Has your own country gone through similar transformation(s) in the past?
- In an interview Satrapi says 'It's the problem that when you leave and then come back, you are a foreigner anywhere. I am a foreigner in Iran. I don't take the risk to go back to my country anymore, but at the same time, it's a good feeling not to belong to any place



anymore, at the same time it's a hard feeling.' What do you think about this statement? Is it a choice of the individual or does 'losing home' simply happens when you live abroad? Have you ever felt anything similar?

TIPS FOR WORKSHOPS:

If there is not enough time to go through the graphic novel, workshops can be based on the film *Persepolis* as well.

Persepolis can also be joined with *Lost in Translation* as both works deal with identity and cultural belonging.

MATERIALS:

Marjane Satrapi *Persepolis I and II*, (London: Vintage, 2000)

Persepolis (2007, M. Satrapi, France, USA)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0808417/>

<http://www.vogue.com/13462655/emma-watson-interviews-marjane-satrapi/>

http://www.bookslut.com/features/2004_10_003261.php

<http://web.archive.org/web/20030622094439/http://www.time.com/time/columnist/arnold/article/0,9565,452401,00.html>



TIMBUKTU

Dir. Abderrahmane Sissako - France Mauritania 2014

THEMES: ISLAM – EXTREMISM – CULTURE CLASH

DESCRIPTION:

The ancient Malian city of Timbuktu is ruled by an Islamist jihadist group. The story follows town's inhabitants' subtle resistance against the drastic laws imposed by the extremists. Although almost all characters come from Mali and share the same religion, the film shows the rich cultural diversity of people living in Timbuktu. Spectators can hear the local languages Tamasheq, Bambara and Arabic as well as the colonial French and English. The values of Tuareg cattle herders, Timbuktu youth, a local imam and Islamist extremists are at the centre of the film and show the fluidity and variety of values among Muslims. Even the most tragic events expose the humanity in all characters.

DISCUSSION:

- What are the different social groups in the film? What joins them and what sets them apart from each other?
- Do you think all characters have been portrayed equally? Is someone shown as better or worse than others?
- What are the different beliefs of Islam in the film? Is one portrayed as better or more important than others?
- How is morality presented in the film?
- What are there clashes between cultures in the film?
- What is the role of languages in Timbuktu? Do ideas get 'lost in translation'?
- How do languages represent different ethnicities? Consider the local languages in contrast with the languages of intruders – English and French.
- Are there different groups among other religions? What are their similarities and differences? Do they all work towards the same goal?
- In *Timbuktu* the law is dependent on religion. What are the advantages and disadvantages of this situation? Do you think religion should be separate from the state?

MATERIALS:

Timbuktu (2014, A. Sissako, France, Mauritania)

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3409392>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-27441139>

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/may/28/timbuktu-review-abderrahmane-sissako-africa>



PEOPLE OF COLOUR IN EUROPEAN ART HISTORY

THEMES: RACE – EUROPE – HISTORY – REPRESENTATION

DESCRIPTION:

People of Colour in European Art History is a crowd-funded independent scholarly project aiming to bring light to non-white people's representation in history and historiography. Quoting the author, the blog's 'purpose [...] is to address common misconceptions that People of Color did not exist in Europe before the Enlightenment, and to emphasize the cognitive dissonance in the way this is reflected in media produced today.' The blog is a diverse collection of little-known to very popular artworks and often features various discussions on racial topics.

DISCUSSION:

- What stereotypes about people of colour the author is attempting to break?
- How are people of colour represented in artworks? Can you find different social classes? How many different professions can you find?
- Who are the artists? How have they portrayed people of colour? What could have influenced their representation? Think about the era, place, and culture the artwork has been made in.
- How much do surroundings influence an artwork in general? Think about the era, country/place, culture, political and ideological atmosphere.
- Choose one artwork and present it to the group. Focus on the representation of cultures, ethnicities and societies.
- What is historical accuracy? Is it achievable? If so, how?
- How are people of colour represented in cultural history in your country? Do they have a place in your country's history? Why/why not?

TIPS FOR WORKSHOPS:

Since the material collected in the blog is vast and continuously expanding, the workshop can focus on a specific era, nation, country, culture, religion or theme. The blog is very well tagged so it is easy to navigate. (For more information see <http://medievalpoc.tumblr.com/FAQ>) The trainer could choose specific artworks, hand out a different one to each person in the group and let them compare and discuss these works. Alternatively, each participant could choose their own artwork for discussion. Looking through the blog you will notice that the author often has discussions with her readers and goes into deep analysis of certain artworks, there you can gain more inspiration and thoughts for discussions in class.

MATERIALS:

<http://medievalpoc.tumblr.com/>



Materials on Intercultural Issues

Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities*

Lera Boroditsky 'How Does Our Language Shape the Way We Think?'

https://www.edge.org/conversation/lera_boroditsky-how-does-our-language-shape-the-way-we-think

'Lost in Translation'

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703467304575383131592767868>

Matthew MacLachlan 'Importance of Cross-Cultural Training'

<https://www.communicaid.com/cross-cultural-training/blog/importance-of-cultural-awareness-training/>

Azar Nafisi *Reading Lolita in Tehran*

Edward Said *Orientalism*

Charles Taylor 'Interculturalism or Multiculturalism?'

<http://www.resetdoc.org/story/00000022267>

Dubravka Ugrešić *Nobody's Home*

Free online course 'Multilingual Learning for a Globalised World' by the University of Glasgow, hosted by FutureLearn

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/multilingual/>



