Course Title: Culture and World Politics (MA, Optional)

Number of Credits: Four

Course Objectives:
The objective of the course is to acquaint students with the complex ways in which the cultural and political realms interact. It undertakes a critical enquiry into the academic and political endeavours that offer cultural interpretations of world politics in both historical and contemporary contexts. It is based on the implicit assumption that politics is negotiated and interpreted through the lens of culture, as are cultural interpretations often imbued with power and political intent. Intended to equip students with the analytical skills to problematise the immediate contexts in which some of the major issues of international politics are embedded, the course covers a broad sweep of issues ranging from strategic culture and diaspora studies to multiculturalism and popular culture. Although it frames culture largely within the IR discourse, it will draw on research and debates from farther afield and hence will be overtly inter-disciplinary in its orientation.

Course Structure:

Unit I: Debating Culture in IR
Unit one serves as an introduction to the field of culture studies in IR. It offers insights into competing approaches to culture by exploring the motivations and political contexts that informed such theorisations.

Week 1: Understanding culture
Week 2: Culture and International Relations
Week 3: Strategic culture
Week 4: Culture as ‘soft power’

Unit II: Cultural Interpretations of World Politics- I
Unit two is an enquiry into the cultural expressions of significant ‘political’ projects and trends of the 19th and 20th centuries. It invites students to explore the cultural hegemony of imperialism, the significance of intercultural communication and the role of the diaspora that mediates between two worlds.

Week 5: Imperialism
Week 6: The politics of pluralism
Week 7: Role of the diaspora

Unit III: Cultural Interpretations of World Politics- II
Unit three is a critical assessment of some of the more recent political developments. It examines the debate over the homogenising force that globalisation is seen as
representing and the role of media in a globalising world. It further explores the return of cultural knowledge to the centre stage of international politics.

Week 8: Assessing globalization

Week 9: The return of cultural knowledge

Week 10: Role of popular culture

Week 11: The Politics of Display

Week 12: Cultural Pasts and Present in South Asia

Reading Suggestions:

During, Simon (2005), Cultural Studies: A Critical Introduction, Abingdon: Routledge


