



## University Preparatory Certificate for the Humanities What is the Culture and Society Unit?

Culture and Society (also described as Cultural Theory and Research Methods) is situated as bridging the academic content of the six core units and the improved communication elements of the Academic English unit. This is a compulsory unit with 3 hours of classes per week. It consists of lectures, seminar discussion classes and whole group research skills classes.

### **Cultural Theory and Research Methods (CTRM) 2012-2013**

The course will introduce you to a range of foundational theories developed and studied in the literature, arts and humanities fields from the postwar period to 'the contemporary.' Through applying theoretical approaches such as Structuralism, Psychoanalysis, Post-structuralism and Postcolonialism to selected literary and non-literary texts, students will develop their ability to ask fundamental questions about cultural and political ideologies that underpin our society and shape the way we perceive the world. In addition, students will be taught research methods; crucial for undertaking the assessed research project in Term 2.

This compulsory module is an important part of the UPC course as it helps to prepare students with the practical academic research skills required to study at British universities and develop the critical thinking skills necessary when considering content. The course will introduce students to a range of foundational theories developed and studied in the literature, arts and humanities fields from the postwar period to 'the contemporary.' Students will use these theories as a tool to explore fundamental questions about the cultural and political ideologies that underpin our society and shape the way we perceive the world. Recurrent ideas explored on the course challenge many of the basic 'givens' of our society such as an individual's ability to think autonomously. We will question to what extent human nature is fixed, to what extent language limits and conditions what we perceive, the influence of social and political forces on our actions, and the provisional nature of truth.

Through practical research methods classes, students become familiar with academic practice and conventions. In addition, research initiative is developed to help students become independent and confident about presenting information in both

### **Content and skills**

The module aims to equip students with the skills of perception and critical analysis. Thinking critically about the nature of culture in society gives us a heightened sense of awareness in the role we, and others, play in constructing our world. More importantly, it allows us to investigate whose views are being privileged and whose are being suppressed.

The theoretical approaches studied are: Structuralism, Psychoanalysis, Post-structuralism, Postmodernism and Postcolonialism. These theories, introduced through lectures, will be used to consider various political and social issues affecting society such as: 'What is literature?', language and its impact on perception', 'the function of myth', 'memory and the problem of representing memory', 'the Unconscious and its influence on our actions' and 'Postmodernism and the absence of autonomy'. During the seminar that follows, students will have the opportunity to discuss theories introduced in the lecture, and apply their knowledge to selected literary texts and films.

### **Course structure**

Students will be introduced to different theoretical approaches through a weekly hour-long lecture. This lecture will be followed by a two-hour seminar class. As well as introducing students to different cultural theories in order to develop critical thinking skills, the lectures provide students with an opportunity to practice their listening and note-taking skills and develop a wider academic vocabulary and phrasing. Students will be tested on cultural theories studied and how they apply to literary and non-literary texts through end of term tests.

A weekly one hour *research methods class* will help you with the practical skills you will need to undertake a research project. In this class, you will learn how to use the library databases and how to evaluate the reliability, credibility and relevance of material selected; how to select a suitable research topic, narrow the focus and write a thesis statement; develop the ability to read academic texts critically; reflect on individual areas of weakness in order to meet personal goals.

The main focus of the research methods class is preparation for the extended research project of 2,500-3000 words. The research project is supported by mini assessment tasks throughout Terms 1 and 2.