

Propositions for Culture Week 2. 2025

1. Kenneth Stickers, Southern Illinois University

Myths of the American Mind

Why do Americans think and act in the ways that they do, often in sharp contrast to the beliefs and behaviors of other Western nations? The course will explore some of the central myths that shape American attitudes, thinking, and behavior. These myths will include:

- Myths of Origin
- Myth of America as a divinely created and favored nation ("under God" and "God-blessed")
- Myth of American Exceptionalism
- Myths of Nature and Wilderness
- Wilderness as temptation to sin: the "Devil's Den"
- Nature as redemptive
- Hero myths: The Rugged Individual and Myths of "Success"
- The Pioneer
- The Cowboy
- The Outlaw
- The Entrepreneur and Myth of the Self-Made Man (in America anyone can become successful and wealth through hard work)
- Native American myths
- Myths of Origin
- Myths of Nature
- Warrior and Shamanic myths

2. Ondrej Dadejik, Martin Kaplicky, Charles University, South Bohemia University

Implicit Aesthetics in Philosophy and Life

- An Outline of Implicit Aesthetics (Whitehead-Dewey)
- Implicit Aesthetics in Everyday Life
- Significant Form from a Process Perspective
- Garden as Process and Aesthetic Experience
- The Problem of Style in Sport and the Question of Aesthetic Relevance

The public lecture - Godfrey Reggio's Quatsi Trilogy as Paradigm of Environmental Aesthetics.

3. Marcin Jacoby, SWPS University, Warsaw,

How to be an ideal ruler of All Under Heaven? Concepts of value-based, servant leadership in ancient China

The course focuses on the *Lüshu Chunqiu* – ancient Chinese leadership almanac from 3rd century BCE. This rare text integrates concepts of leadership from different schools of thought of pre-Imperial China (including Confucianism, Daoism, Legalism, Yinyang, and others), and builds a unique proposal of how to be an ideal, moral ruler of All Under Heaven (*tianxia*). The work was compiled by a group of political philosophers and advisors centred around Lü Buwei – a powerful figure at the court of the state of Qin. The concepts advocated in the work were discarded by the First Emperor of Qin, who built his empire using coercion, and ruled through fear. His empire collapsed almost immediately after his death, testifying to the ineffectiveness of his vision of an “eternal” political system.

The ideas expressed in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* seem surprisingly modern and well-suited to contemporary theories of servant leadership and value-based leadership (VBL). They can be practically applied not only in politics, but most of all, in large enterprises. The text advocates informed decision-making, reliance on experts and delegation of responsibilities. It shows that humble, ethical leadership can be far more effective than what strong, charismatic leaders and autocratic figures achieve using pressure, punishment, and fear. Above all, *Lüshi Chunqiu* helps to understand the complexities of the rich heritage of Chinese political thought of the pre-imperial period (i.e. prior to 221 BCE).

The course explains the sources of some of the key philosophical concepts present in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* through references to other works, such as *Xunzi*, *Laozi* or *Zhuangzi*. This is followed by in-depth discussion of selected concepts of leadership. Students are encouraged to relate these ancient ideals to modern leadership theory, and to explore how some of these ideas are or could be applied in practice in today’s context.

Students are not expected to have any command of Chinese or any prior knowledge of Chinese philosophy. English translations of the texts discussed will be used throughout the course.

4. Mantas Antanas Davidavičius, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania,

Ecosophy and The Image of Other

Too often environmental problems are treated as either merely technological issues or just a question of resource allocation. First and foremost, we should acknowledge, that the contemporary situation is a result of a certain set of modern ideas about ourselves and the Other. In our case, this “Other” usually takes the shapes of the Animal or the Nature and cements the technological-industrial worldview. Thus, as Arne Næss has noticed, any real solution to environmental problems must include a shift in philosophical (ontological, ethical and aesthetical) ideas about ourselves and our environment. This course will critically examine the modern notions of the Other and the Otherness, revealing the flaws which stem from a classical subject - object dualism, as well as strict mind - body

dualism, and as an alternative to this dualistic approach it will introduce contemporary interpretations of Object-oriented ontology and the rhizomatic perspective. It will be shown that distance employed by subject (the distance of gaze; the detachment of various kinds from the objectivity), creates a false impression of essential separateness from our surroundings. Because of this reason, possible philosophical solutions for environmental crisis – which will be examined in this course – must include an essential change in our self-identification. It will be shown that such change must move away from Cartesian-Kantian line on one hand, and it must evade Romanticism and romantic interpretations of Otherness on the other. Most of this course will be centered on the works of contemporary eco-philosophical thinkers, such as Timothy Morton, Arne Næss, Jacques Derrida, Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway.