

Western Culture and Counterculture

Prof. dr. Wouter J. Hanegraaff

BA Program, 1th Semester, Block 1-2, 2016-2017

Tuesdays 9.00-12.00

Objectives

Having completed this course, students will have acquired a solid overview of (1) the main general currents of Western intellectual and cultural history from late antiquity to the present, (2) their relation to those currents, ideas, practices, and organizations that have tended to be suppressed, marginalized, or discredited in traditional academic scholarship, and (3) the polemical and apologetic discourses that have produced and regulated the relation between these two.

Contents

First of all, this lecture course provides a bird's-eye overview of the main currents of Western intellectual and cultural history from Late Antiquity to the present, with an emphasis on the interwoven histories of philosophy, religion, the natural sciences, and the arts, and with due attention to their political and social context. At the same time, it problematizes the hegemonic agendas and implicit ideological assumptions that have driven traditional historical narratives of Western culture, by giving systematic attention to a range of currents, ideas, practices, and organizations that have tended to be rejected, suppressed, marginalized, or discredited in traditional academic scholarship. By giving equal attention to normative ideas of "Western Culture" and to the various kinds of "Counter Culture" against which it defines its own identity, the module both describes *and* questions the "grand narratives" that have dominated our understanding of Western Culture in the academy. Against this background, special attention will go to the basic polemical and apologetic discourses that inform current intellectual as well as public debates about religion and its relation to modernity.

Relation to Western esotericism

The module "Western Culture and Counter Culture" is part of the Bachelor program Study of Religion and the more specialized Bachelor Minor "Western esotericism". While it provides a general overview of "mainstream" Western culture, its special focus on "counterculture" (broadly equivalent, in this context, to the types of rejected knowledge studied under the label "Western esotericism") means that it also provides an ideal historical and theoretical background for those students who are interested in following the seminars

“Western Esotericism in the Early Modern Period” (Dr. P.J. Forshaw) and “Western Esotericism from the 18th Century to the Present” (Dr. M. Pasi).

Teaching format

Lectures

Credits

12 ECTS

Entry requirements

None

Assessment

Two written examinations, at the end of each block, about the contents of the lectures and the reading materials for the preceding seven weeks. Each examination consists of seven open questions, and the resulting grade counts for 50% of the final grade.

Resit

If the final grade is insufficient (= below 5.5), then there is an opportunity at the end of the semester for a resit of *one* of the two examinations. In case both examinations were insufficient, you can choose which one you wish to do again (a resit for both examinations is not possible). The resit has the same format as the standard written examinations: seven open questions, with the result counting for 50% of the final grade. Only in exceptional cases (based on a specific request with convincing motivation, or in case of a very low number of participants) the resits may take the form of an oral examination.

Program

[under construction]

For each week you will be asked to read
a few selected sources that are
relevant to the week's topic.
These titles will be provided
well before the start of the course.

1. Week 36 (6 September): Paganism

2. Week 37 (13 September): Monotheism
 3. Week 38 (20 September): Entanglement
 4. Week 39 (27 September): Nature
 5. Week 40 (4 October): Mythologies
 6. Week 41 (11 October): Renaissance
 7. Week 42 (18 October): Reformations
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- [Week 43: **examination 1**]
8. Week 44 (1 November): Science
 9. Week 45 (8 November): Enlightenment
 10. Week 46 (15 November): Romanticism
 11. Week 47 (22 November): Disenchantment
 12. Week 48 (29 November): Modernity
 13. Week 49 (6 December): Postmodernity
 14. Week 50 (13 December): Now

[week 51: **examination 2**]