



Wednesday Evening Seminar Fall 2013 Syllabus

The Anatomy of Identity: *Identifying the Roots of Identity in Oceania and Asia*

**Keoni Auditorium
Hawai‘i Imin International Conference Center
September 11– November 13, 2013
6:30 - 8:30 pm**

INTRODUCTION

Who are we and how do we know who we are? What factors and everyday activities provide us with the blueprint of our own identities? These are questions that any human being on this planet has inevitably encountered in their daily routine. As life progresses and our circumstances and environments change, it is sometimes amazing how we can either remain rooted in who we were in the past or completely change with our environment. History shows us that scientists and curious individuals have vigorously spent countless hours investigating how our bodies breathe, see, hear, feel, and taste. They possessed an insatiable appetite for understanding what components make up our bodies and why our bodies function the way they do. In essence after years of inspiration and research, these scientists and individuals have been successful and were able to nearly complete their analysis of the anatomy of the body. They meticulously broke down the body into its various parts and described how these parts work together to function as the whole. Yet, this really isn’t the whole picture of who human beings are because we are not just physical shells. There is a whole another world going on beyond the physical.

Most of us have some basic knowledge of the anatomical construction of our bodies, but an enormous amount of people often go through what they call “identity crises.” People feeling absolutely lost in their bodies, unaware of what is going on with their lives or with themselves. On the other hand, some people are so in touch with their beings and feel in control of who they are as a person. The goal behind this semester’s theme, “The Anatomy of Identity,” is to continue the work of physiologists and anatomists of the body by becoming anatomists of personal identity, cultural identity, and in tune with the goal of the East-West Center, a regional identity. Through the talks, activities, and speakers, attendees will have the opportunity to examine aspects of daily life they may have taken for granted and understand its link to this holistic concept we call “identity.”

At the East-West Center, one is able to see people from all different walks of life and different parts of the world. These people are able to come together to look at different problems and issues with varying perspectives. This is the importance of the East-West Center: its ability to combine various perspectives to encounter issues on a global unified level. Although it is important to encounter this variety, it is also helpful to find the common threads of humanity that run through the blood of every attendee. The ability to find similarities between you and the person next to you even if that person comes from a part of the world you have never heard of is one of the most rewarding experiences. “The Anatomy of Identity” will not only allow us to understand the roots of identity, but it will also lead to creative dialogue, deep critical thinking, and a built-in camaraderie. By getting to know ourselves, we can better be suited to understand and accept those who may appear different from us at first.

“Knowing the root of your identity will help you make better sense of this tree of life.”

OVERVIEW OF THE WEDNESDAY EVENING SEMINAR

The Wednesday Evening Seminar (WES) is a weekly gathering of East West Center fellows in their first fall and spring semester. WES brings together students and researchers from diverse academic disciplines, geographic areas, life experiences, and East-West Center programs to learn and dialogue on issues of common concern that impact Asia, the U.S., and Oceania.

While the graduate student experience tends to focus attention on highly specialized fields of study at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, the WES challenges EWC fellows to explore regional issues that may extend beyond their range of expertise or comfort zones. Issues are explored through invited speakers, films and facilitated small group discussions and activities. Through this process EWC fellows forge bonds among themselves through relating their personal or community concerns and experiences that ultimately strengthen the Center’s diverse global community.

As with many innovative activities at the East-West Center, WES emerged from student recommendations and student-led action. EWC fellows perceived the need for a unifying intellectual experience in an increasingly diversified student program. WES began as a series of East-West Center-wide discussions to explore the concept, and emerged as a student leadership project that developed into a distinctive, on-going feature of the student program.

Currently, the seminar is planned and organized by East-West Center degree-fellow interns, with the support of the Center’s Education and Research program staff. The Seminar is required for degree student fellows during their first fall and spring semesters, and fall semester for Asia Pacific Leadership Program fellows. Continuing fellows are welcome to attend and often continue to participate in the seminar series.

OBJECTIVES

The goal of the East-West Center is to contribute to a peaceful, prosperous, and just Asian and Oceanic community, thus serving as a vigorous hub for cooperative research, education, and dialogue on critical issues of common concern to Asia, the U.S., and Oceania. The Wednesday Evening Seminar helps reach this goal by facilitating dialogue and mutual understanding among the students of the United States, Asia, and Oceania who study together at the East-West Center.

REQUIREMENTS: ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Students must attend all WES sessions and participate in group discussions and activities. If you are unable to attend a session, please contact Mendl Djunaidy (DjunaidM@eastwestcenter.org). Attendance will be kept.

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