The Lecturer: Professor Krzysztof Gawlikowski, Ph.D.
e-mail: kgawlikowski@swps.edu.pl

Western and Confucian civilisations: essential differences in business and management cultures.

An Introduction

Lectures, 30 hours

Academic year 2011/12, winter semester, Tuesday, 12.00-13.30, room S-203

The course description:
At the beginning of the 21st century there are the three economic and political centres in the world: the USA, European Union and North-East Asia, in particular China and Japan. The USA and Europe both share Western, essentially Christian, civilisation, whereas China and Japan share Confucian-Buddhist civilisation. These two civilisations encompass almost a half of the mankind and the powers belonging to them lead the contemporary world. F.W.Mote indicates that these two civilisations are the most diverse in the world, although the processes of modernization connected them and unified various aspects of life in the countries belonging to them. Notwithstanding the processes of partial westernisation of Asian countries, the profound cultural differences remain and will be maintained in the foreseeable future. Of course, individual countries within each of these civilisations have their own distinctive cultures.

The course presents Western and Confucian-Buddhist civilisations, their origins, peculiar characteristics, and main differences, indicating various practical implications for their diverse business and management cultures, as well as their influence on everyday life and ways of thinking. The contemporary debates on the interrelations among various civilisations, and on the changing role of the West are also presented. The course is of an interdisciplinary nature and combines anthropological, historical, philosophical and political approaches.

Confucian-Buddhist civilisation originated in China, but shaped also Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese cultures and traditions. One has to bear in mind that the Chinese live in numerous states or separate administrative entities. The People’s Republic of China includes such autonomous units, as Hong Kong and Macao, there are also Taiwan (of a controversial political status) and Singapore. Moreover Chinese communities play an essential role in the South-East Asian economies. All together the people sharing this civilisation count for ca. 1,800 million. The West has Christian roots and is based on the Ancient Greek and Roman traditions, and its modern form was shaped by the Enlightenments. It includes Europe, the USA and Canada, as well as Australia and New Zealand, inhabited by slightly more than 1 billion peoples (it is a controversial issue whether East.Europe, where the Orthodox Church predominates, belongs to the West, there are also doubts concerning Latin America). Today Western civilisation is also appreciated, at least, partially by the elite in the numerous Asian, African, and Latin American countries; hence it has a special position in the world.

The aim of the course:
In the epoch of globalisation the business people, managers and politicians rarely could operate merely in their own societies or to deal only with societies similar to their own. Usually they have to co-operate and deal with the people grown up in other civilisations. For instance, the Westerners have to deal with the East Asians, and vice versa. People from the countries, which do not belong to any of these two civilisations, have to learn the rules of the both alien civilisations. Operators should know at least essential rules of other civilisations to succeed,
and first of all should realise that the rules of their own societies are not universal. The course is outlined to facilitate understanding of each of these great civilisations: Western and Confucian. This could be helpful not only to the Westerners and the East Asians, but for persons from a third civilisation as well, for instance Islamic. Such a brief course could merely indicate some of the most fundamental differences and illustrate the problem of differences in cultures and traditions, that determine also differences in the ways of doing business and in management.

The demands:
The participation at the lectures is obligatory, since the existing literature covers only some problems, and in order to compensate the absence a student should read numerous books and studies, which would be difficult and time consuming. Only 3 abstentions could be accepted. During the course of lectures students are expected to read indicated publications in order to understand better the subject. The use of internet sources is also recommended. Every student can interrupt the lecture posing additional questions or asking for explanations of unclear problems. The course ends with a written test. In particular individual cases an additional oral examination could be arranged to complement the written test.

The topics of lectures:
1. The significance of the West and of East Asia in the contemporary world. The origins of Western and Confucian civilisations, their evolution, diffusion, and changing mutual interrelations. Their internal differentiation. Other great civilisations.
2. Various theories and concepts concerning cultural differences, their significance and their evolution: civilisation vs. ‘barbarians’ or numerous civilisations; ethnocentrism; ideas of the ‘mission of the West’ and of ‘decline of the West’; the idea of ‘progress’; F. Fukuyama’s ‘the end of history’; S. P. Huntington’s ‘the clash of civilisations’; S.N. Eisenstadt’s ‘the Axial Age’ and the ‘multiple modernities’; J.M. Guéhenno’s and M. Castells’s the future ‘net structures’ instead democracy; UN ‘dialogue between cultures and civilisations’.
3. Western and Confucian civilisations - their fundamental differences:
   a) God and the world created by him vs. The Way (dao) and the concept of gigantic ‘Organism’ (with order/disorder cycles); the separation of matter and spirits vs. ‘integral entities’; the Absolute Truth vs. multiple and relative truths; the separation of sacrum and profanum vs. ‘objects containing/manifesting certain powers’
   b) Equality vs. Hierarchy; the world and Man from the Eastern and the Western perspectives;
   c) Antagonistic dualism (God – Satan/ Light-Darkness) vs. complementary dualism (Yin and Yang/Feminine and Masculine principles); absolute categories vs. relative categories; Permanence vs. eternal and endless Changes; the Western concepts of Choice and of Conscience; Pluralism and Struggle vs. Unity and Harmony;
   d) Time and Space: linear vs. Cyclical; undifferentiated vs. differentiated; cause and result vs. a ‘sequence of states’ and ‘resonance’; the role of ‘conditions’ and Men’s responsibility;
5. Man and Society:
   c) Different concept of Man’s ‘spirit”; one invaluable life or endless incarnations; different relations with the Nature;
d) Different types of religiousness: orthodoxy vs. orthopraxy; separated ‘religion’ vs. diffused and syncretic religiousness; theocentrism vs. anthropocentrism;

4. Society: its organisation and functioning:
   a) Glorification of Struggle and Competition vs. apotheosis of Harmony, Consensus and Peace; adversary systems vs. ‘fiducial communities’ (Tu Wei-ming); manifestation of individualism vs. ‘to be like others”; glorification of rebellions and protests vs. Respect for authority, obedience, accord, softness; the practical problems of saying ‘no’;
   b) Open struggle and chivalrous codes vs. secret struggle and the use of stratagems;
   c) Western egalitarian spirit and informal behaviour vs. Respect for hierarchy; Western low ritual societies vs. Confucian high ritual societies, ambiguity and tolerance for differences vs. precision and intolerance; individual freedom vs. obeying strict norms;
   d) Western fixation on Law vs. Confucian Li (Etiquette, Norms); Western emphasis on Rights vs. Confucian emphasis on duties;
   e) Western glorification of autonomous Individual vs. Confucian glorification of Family and of Community; different treatment of the Other; the Confucian concepts of ‘face’, ‘renqing’ and of ‘guanxi”; formalised impersonal power vs. paternalistic power; different concepts of ‘democracy’ and different approaches to politics.

6. Business and management:
   a) Different approaches to a company/firm and to work; different priorities: profit making vs. social ties; fixed formal agreement in a written form vs. verbal agreement, flexibility and ‘mutual understanding’;
   b) Individual arbitrary decisions by the chiefs vs. collective, consensual decisions; various styles of directing/using subordinates; Western concept of ‘stick and carrot’ - Confucian concept of wen and wu;
   c) Western fixation on strict principles vs. Confucian ethical tradition, ‘contextual ethics’, and the pragmatic Legalist, Strategic and Taoist traditions; Chinese strategic concepts and the art of planning and manipulating.
   d) Etiquette in business – practical advices; styles and modes of negotiating.

Obligatory Readings:
Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of World Order*, NY, Simon & Shuster, 1996, Part I; Part III, chapter 6; Part IV, chapter 8; Part V.
(All available at the Oriental Division of our Library, Room no. 113)

Recommended Readings:


----------, ed., *Axial Civilizations and World History*, ed. et all, Brill, 2005

----------, *Multiple Modernities*, Transaction Publishers 2002

----------, *Comparative Civilizations and Multiple Modernities*, Brill, 2003


----------, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, Allen Lane,


----------, *Korean Business Etiquette: the Cultural Values and Attitudes that Make Up the Korean Business Personality*, Boston, Mass.: Tuttle Pub., 2004


