

## **Categories of the European Culture**

The aim of this course is to analyse community-making and boundary-setting processes in the European culture. We shall try to answer some significant questions, like those concerning the position of elites in classical culture, ancient and medieval communal identity, the ideas organising the opposition between 'We' and 'Them', and, above all else, what was and what is the meaning of the very term 'Europe'.

The course is of an interdisciplinary character: in our reflexions we will explore the fields of history and culture, history of ideas, literature and sociology. It is divided into three semi-independent parts.

1. The first part can be described also as a 'Greek module', during which we will primarily concentrate on the Greek elites' way of conceptualising the world that they established, reflected mainly in the great epic poetry, like Homer's 'Odyssey', as well as in Greek lyric and elegiac poetry.
2. The second part – 'Imperial module' – will be dedicated to the growth of pan-European imperial structures. We will focus on Roman and Eastern Roman ('Byzantine') Empire – on the way those super-organisms subdued, framed and organised the reality of many different ethnic groups.
3. The last part, which can be also named 'National module', is about the erosion and fall of the great universal structures, replaced by smaller, but more coherent and self-aware ethnic units: nations. Our reflections in this part will be revolving mainly around ideas of Ernest Gellner and José Ortega y Gasset.

I will ask participants of the course to read for our every meeting a short text that will shed some light on the problems in question. During the classes we will also work on some texts that will help us to develop further our knowledge of the above-mentioned topics. Yet first and foremost, the course is not about 'what have you read' but about 'what do you think', and this is why I hope for the vivid and constructive discussion.