

Study Guide for “Coming to Terms with Cultures” *

1. The genre of story is prominent in the lecture. What functions do you think the use of stories performs in the service of the lecture’s purpose? Are there communicative, rhetorical, and identifying functions performed by the use of stories? Could the lecture have been given without stories? Why, or why not?
2. Of the four main stories, which is the one with which you most identify? Why? How does that affect your hearing of the lecture?
3. Youth and age, and persons speaking to each other across the generations, is one of the themes running through the lecture. Where do you see this theme introduced? What function do you think this theme serves in the lecture? How might this theme be appropriate to the larger topic of the lecture?
4. Near the beginning of the Lecture, the speaker makes reference to four books that he had at hand as inspiration and guide as he wrote the lecture. One of these is a book about finance and investing, at least on the surface, but also is a book about the possibility of humans predicting the course of human events. Do you think this theme recurs and is developed during the course of the lecture and, if so, where, and how? Do you think this is an important theme in terms of the subject of the lecture?
5. Another book that the author acknowledges concerns spiritual matters in general and, in particular, the importance of the individual in community denying ego or self in preference for a concern for others and the community as a whole. Do you agree with what the lecturer says about the importance of self-abnegation in living a life successfully in community with others? Is there a book that you know of, from a religious or ethical tradition that is important to you, that you think might speak to—and to help develop—this theme of the lecture?
6. The third book mentioned on the list of those kept close at hand is a book about rhetoric, or persuasion. Do you think the author’s claim that the art of persuasion can be an important art in the contending an individual might feel she or he must do in relation to cultures in their life world? Do you know Aristotle’s Rhetoric (the book the lecturer mentions)? If so, does that treatise on persuasion relate in some particular way to the overall argument of the lecture? If so, how does it relate? Are there other treatises of persuasion that you think might speak to the concerns of the lecture?
7. The fourth book is about cookery, or healthy eating. The lecturer says it plays mainly a stylistic inspiration—to put his ideas into short, pithy phrases. Do you think there are other ways the cookery theme, as it is developed, plays a role in the message of the lecture? How is that? Are there places later in the essay where cookery returns as a leitmotif and, if so, does that help the development of the lecture’s message?

8. When you first read or hear the lecture, did you read or hear it all in one sitting, or take? If so, how do you think the order of the four main stories or cases affected your response to the lecture overall? Would it have affected you differently if there were a different ordering of these four stories?

9. There are many references to place and places throughout the lecture. Where are these and how is place referenced and used by the lecturer? Do you think these place references have any significance in terms of the topic of coming to terms with cultures? If so, how; if not, why not? If you read more fully some of the sources the lecture used, do you find other references to place that might elaborate or enlarge the impact of the lecture? Be as specific as you can be.

10. If you have read other work by the lecturer, for example, *Speaking Culturally* or "A Theory of Speech Codes," does your reading of these works give you insight into the lecture that you might not otherwise have? If so, how?

11. Thinking about the overall purpose and topic of the lecture, are there themes that you think the author should have addressed but did not? Be as specific as you can be in saying what the theme(s) is (are).

*Gerry Philipsen, "Coming to Terms with Cultures," the Carroll C. Arnold Distinguished Lecture, 2009, presented at the 94th Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association, November, 2009, San Diego, California.