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This historically and theoretically informed study examines the career of the culture concept and related notions of context. Adopting an inter-disciplinary approach, and drawing on a wide range of sources, the book examines the influence of the disciplines of anthropology and history in the development of culture and context as key concepts in political studies and the human sciences more generally. Particular attention is paid to the way in which culture as context has been implicated in constructions of identity and political community, and how this has played out in debates about nationalism and democracy. The study also shows how certain assumptions about culture and context have contributed to some of the most problematic dichotomies in world politics, including the West/non-West divide. Moving beyond critique, the analysis shows how culture may be re-conceptualized in a theory of cosmopolitan pluralism that avoids the errors of both a dogmatic universalism and an equally dogmatic relativism in the study of world politics.

Introduction

World Politics and the Cultural Turn

Varieties of Contextualism

Culture and the Emergence of the Human Sciences

Culture/s: Conceptualization and Theorization

History, Culture and the National State

Conceptualizing Culture in Political Studies

Contextualizing Cultural Politics

Beyond Dichotomies in World Politics

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