According to the Cambridge Dictionary, cultural appropriation is “the act of taking or using things from a culture that is not your own, especially without showing that you understand or respect this culture.” On the other hand, cultural appreciation is the act of trying to understand and learn about another culture in an effort to broaden their perspective and connect with other cultures. Ms. Harris’ lecture revolved heavily around these two topics. We discussed whether certain deeds can be considered an act of appropriation or appreciation (cultural ally). For example, Kevin Hart, an American comedian, actor, and producer threw cowboys and Indians themed celebration for his son Kenzo Hart’s first birthday. Quite a few people felt that the theme for the party was a cultural appropriation and because of that, it was a shameful and ignorant idea. However, I think that they are being overly sensitive and unnecessarily offended by the party. A lot of argument against the party was that it was disrespectful to Indian culture. I cannot comprehend what they mean by that. Was it disrespectful just because Kevin tried to incorporate cowboy and Indian culture to the party without understanding their history? If that is the case, everything that we do in this world is disrespectful to other culture. For example, if we wear a suit and a tie without knowing how it originated we are disrespecting British culture. Similarly, if we are eating or making tacos without understanding its history, we are appropriating Mexican culture. America is a melting pot of different cultures around the world and we are at a point in time where everything we do appropriates other cultures. Therefore, I can argue that although Kevin Hart appropriated the Indian culture, he did not do anything wrong and people should mind their own business instead of getting offended by it.

Another case that we studied in class was Kim Kardashian’s braided hairstyle. She credited her hairstyle to Bo Derek, an actress known for her seductive roles in films in the 1970s and 1980s. However, the origin of the braids can be traced back 5000 years in African culture. Kim was criticized for not knowing the history of the braids and appropriating the African culture. It was condemned as a sign of disrespect to that culture. I agree that she was involved in cultural appropriation, but it doesn’t prove anything about her disrespecting the culture. In fact, she braided her hair because she loved it. Even though she doesn’t know the history, she is embracing the culture. This incident shows that she is appreciating the cultural element by appropriating the culture. If people find that offensive, then they should learn something more important than their history lessons – minding their own business.

In the movie, Dances with Wolves, John Dunbar minds his own business taking care of his post until he crosses path with people of Sioux tribe. After a few incidents John Dunbar becomes very close to the Sioux and internalizes their culture. For instance, he gets rid of his uniform and wears an Indian cloth. He doesn’t know the significance of that outwear but he wears it to feel like one of them. Similarly, in one part of the movie, he dances in front of bonfire mimicking the moves of Sioux. He doesn’t know the actual purpose of the dance or the significance of each move, but he does it anyway just to get rid of his loneliness. These are acts of cultural appropriation in part of John Dunbar. On the other hand, when Sioux village was attacked by Pawnees, the Sioux people used guns to drive away their enemies. The guns were the element of white culture which the Sioux did not respect. They did not know the history of guns, but they used it for their and their families’ safety. Therefore, Sioux can also be accused of cultural appropriation. However, both John Dunbar and Sioux did what they did because they trusted each other and wanted to understand each other. Therefore, there is an element of cultural appreciation in their actions.

Ms. Harris’ lecture made me realize that cultural appropriation does not necessarily have to be seen from a negative perspective. One can appropriate other’s culture in an attempt to appreciate that culture. Therefore, we should not judge that person and get offended by their appropriation because the reason for their appropriation could be their desire for appreciation.