

# Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

ANTH 2, Summer Session

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Office Hours:

## Course Description

This course aims to introduce students to the fundamentals of cultural anthropology, including historical development, methodologies, key perspectives, and potential applications. Anthropology, as a relatively new academic subject can be traced to a certain historical moment. The first part of the course explores this early history of the discipline and its early connection to the natural sciences, the enlightenment, and theories of evolution. This sections contextualizes the development of anthropology within a larger political, economic, and scientific history of the US and Europe. We will also discuss anthropological connections to colonial and imperial projects during the early moments of its development.

Currently, the discipline of anthropology is more clearly delineated through methodological practices rather than areas of study and the next section documents the development of anthropological methods over time. We will learn about participant observation, ethnographic interviews, fieldwork, and how methods influence the changing relationship of anthropology with other disciplines in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. We will also examine how anthropology as a discipline has responded to post-modern and post-colonial critiques with renewed emphasis on self-reflexivity and writing as anthropological practices.

Anthropology teaches us to look at the world in new ways, examining categories we take for granted and showing how they have been culturally constructed. This next section looks at anthropological perspectives on race and gender, politics and nation state, medicine and the body, and conservation and nature. In each case anthropological analyses denaturalizes and challenges dominant narratives. These critiques illustrate how current anthropologists help us see the world in exciting new ways.

The last section is designed to answer a question that many students have after being exposed to anthropological perspectives for the first time: what to do with this new knowledge? By examining the historical relationships between theoretical and applied anthropology, and the challenges of combining theory and practice, this section opens up a conversation about how anthropological perspectives can engage public life outside of academia. The section provides a few examples of the different role anthropologists can assume in government, NGO, and corporate institutions and the specific challenges and opportunities this kind of work represents.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING CRITERIA

### Grading Criteria

Attendance and Participation	15%
Biography of a Famous Anthropologist	15%
Participant Observation	20%
Article Summary	20%
Anthropological Applications	30%

### ***Part 1: History and Development of the Discipline***

#### ***Biography of a famous anthropologist:***

Pick one famous anthropologist and write a 2-3 page essay describing his/her contributions to the field of anthropology. Talk about their academic background, fieldwork experiences, important publications, and theoretical contributions. Situate the anthropologist within a history of the discipline. What (and who) were they arguing for and against? Use at 2-3 outside sources and include a bibliography.

e.g. James Frazer, Lewis Henry Morgan, E.B. Tyler, Claude Levi-Strauss, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Radcliffe-Brown, Bronislaw Malinowski, Franz Boas, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Alfred Kroeber, Clifford Geertz, Mary Douglas, and others.

*Due Week 2*

### ***Part 2: Anthropological Methods***

#### ***Participant Observation***

Pick a place that you would like to observe. This could be a beach, coffee shop, store, library, music event, museum, park, etc. You will conduct participant observation at the site to determine how men and women use the site differently. Spend 1-2 hours observing the site and writing your observations down. You can include sketches, photos, or sketched maps of the site. Document anything what the site looks like, the architecture, decor, advertisements, signs, that might affect how the space is marked and used. Be self-reflexive and discuss how your own gender affects your observations and what you notice. Write a 4 page paper that describes your site, summarizes your observations, and analyzes how different genders use and occupy the space differently.

*Due Week 3*

### ***Part 3 Anthropological perspectives***

#### ***Article Summary***

Find a topic, issue, question, or problem that interests you, this could be related to your major or another interest. It could be social (homelessness, gangs, crime), environmental (tropical deforestation, coastal conservation, global warming), political (race in politics, bureaucracy, US foreign policy in Latin America), economic (housing foreclosures, neoliberalism, student loans), or a another interest (music, backpacking, surfing, a film genre, etc). Find an anthropological article related to the topic you have selected. This make take some work and flexibility to find what you are looking for or may even require you to modify your topic somewhat. Read the article and then write a 2-3 page summary and analysis of the article. What is the author's main point? How do they support their argument? What are their methods? How does this article change your perspective on the topic you have selected? What categories do they challenge or deconstruct? What don't they talk about? Your paper should contain roughly 2/3 summary and 1/3 analysis.

*Due Week 4*

### ***Part 4 Applied anthropology***

#### ***Anthropological Applications***

Use the same topic you selected for the last assignment and find another 2-3 articles on the same or similar topic. Try to find at least one that has an applied perspective. Write a 5 page analysis that includes a discussion of the anthropological perspective on the topic; summarizing, comparing, and contrasting the different author's approaches to the topic. Describe how an anthropological perspective on the topic could be applied to that given topic through public policy recommendations, conservation goals, marketing practices, or some other way. Think about how the anthropological research you have summarized provides insight to other people involved with that topic.

*Due Week 5*

## READINGS AND CLASS DISCUSSION TOPICS

### Course Texts:

Lassiter, Luke Eric (2002) *Invitation to Anthropology*. Altamira Press.

All other readings will be available as PDFs on eCommons.

### Part 1: History and Development of the Discipline (Week 1)

#### *A. Introduction: what is anthropology?*

When did cultural anthropology develop? What is the four-field approach to anthropology? How does anthropology develop different in England, US, and Europe? How did cultural anthropology develop over time?

Miner, Horace (1956) *Body ritual among the Nacirema*.

Lassiter, Luke Eric (2002) Chapter 1: *Evolution and Critique of Race: A short story*. In. *Invitation to Anthropology*. Altamira Press. Pp 9-36.

#### *B. Theoretical Foundations*

What is culture? How have ideas of culture changed over time? How does that reflect changes in the development of cultural anthropology? What are some of the major shifts in anthropological perspectives over time?

Lassiter, Luke Eric (2002) Chapter 2: *Anthropology and Culture*. In. *Invitation to Anthropology*. Altamira Press. Pp 37-68.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. (1950) *Social Anthropology Past and Present*. In. *Social Anthropology and Other Essays*. Pp 139-154.

Mead, Margaret (1928) "Introduction" and "A day in Samoa," In. *Coming of Age in Samoa*.

### Video

Ishi DVD 395

### Part 2: Anthropological Methods (Week 2)

#### *Ethnography and Participant Observation*

What are key anthropological methodologies? How have they developed over time? How are ethnographic methods important for defining the discipline? What makes anthropology distinct from related disciplines of sociology?

Lassiter, Luke Eric (2002) Chapter 3: *Ethnography*. In. *Invitation to Anthropology*. Altamira Press. Pp 69-98.

Malinowski, B. (1961 [1922]) "Introduction: the subject, methods and scope of inquiry." In. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. E.P. Dutton and Co, Inc. Pp1-25.

Geertz, Clifford (1966) *Thick description, towards an interpretive theory of culture*. In. *The interpretation of culture*. Basic Books. Pp 3-30.

#### *Problems of Representations: the Post-modern turn in anthropology*

How did the discipline of anthropology and related disciplines in the humanities and social sciences challenge their own perspectives? What is the role of post-colonial, feminist, and cultural studies

scholars in these critiques? How did this change the focus and development of the discipline? How did this change the kinds of topics anthropologists researched?

Kondo, Dorinne (1986) Dissolution and reconstitution of the self: implications for anthropological epistemology. *Cultural Anthropology* 1(1); 74-88.

Rosaldo, Renato (1994) Subjectivity in social analysis. In. *The Post-modern turn: new perspectives on social analysis*. Ed. Steven Seidman.

Clifford, James (1986) Introduction: partial truths. In: *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*. University of California Press. Ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Pp1-26

## **Video**

Number our Days, Barbara Meyerhoff

## **Part 3: Anthropological perspectives: upsetting categories (Week 3 and 4)**

What is an anthropological perspective? What kinds of things does anthropology call into question? What kinds of questions does it ask and how does it try to answer them?

### ***Examining Social Categories: Race and gender***

How has anthropological research on race and gender shaped the discipline? How do cross-cultural analyses challenge racial and gender stereotypes? How does anthropology contribute to larger movements against discrimination based on race and gender?

Lassiter, Luke Eric (2002) Chapter 5: Sex, power, and inequality. In. *Invitation to Anthropology*. Altamira Press.

Ortner, S (1972) Is female to male as nature is to culture? *Feminist Studies* 1(2): 5-31.

Martin, Emily (1991) The egg and the sperm: how science has constructed a romance based on stereotypical male-female roles. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16(3): 485-501.

Fry, Peter (2000) Politics, nationality, and the meaning of "race" in Brazil. *Daedalus* 129(2): 83-118.

### ***Politics and nation-states***

How have anthropologists talked about nations-states, governments and politics? How have they contributed to a more fragmented and diverse vision of the state? What are the implications of this research?

Gupta, A. (1995) Blurred boundaries; the discourse of corruption, the culture of politics, and the imagined state. *American Ethnologist* 22(2): 375-402.

Nugent, S (2001) Corruption in low places: sewers and succession in political office. *The Journal of Historical Sociology* 14(2): 135-148

### ***Science and the body: Medical Anthropology***

How have anthropologists thought about the body? What is the role of medical anthropology in re-examining these categories? How is the body both biological and cultural?

Bourgois, Phillip (1998) Addict: confronting ethnography, HIV risk, and everyday violence in San Francisco shooting encampments. *Substance use and Misuse*. Vol 33(11) 2323-2351

Farmer, Paul (1988) Bad blood and spoiled milk: bodily fluids as moral barometers in rural Haiti. *American Ethnologist*. 15(1) 62-83.

Wolfmeyer, Matthew (2008) Sleep, signification and the abstract body of allopathic medicine. *Body and Society* 14(4): 93-114.

***Conservation and nature: environmental anthropology and political ecology***

How have anthropologists challenged traditional narratives of environmental destruction? Of conservation efforts? How does this change how we think about solutions to environmental problems?

Dove, Michael (1993) A revisionist view of tropical deforestation and development. *Environmental Conservation* 20(1): 17-24.

Conklin, B. and L. Graham (1995) The shifting middle ground: Amazonian Indians and ecopolitics in Brazil. *American Anthropologist*.

Fairhead, J. and M. Leach (1995) Reading forest history backwards; the interaction of policy and local land use in Guinea's forest-savanna mosaic, 1893-1993. *Env. and History* 1: 55-91.

**Part 4: What to do with Anthropology? applied anthropology (Week 5)**

What can I do with a degree in Anthropology? How can anthropology be applied in different kinds of careers? How has applied anthropology developed over time? What kinds of skills does anthropology give you and how can they be used across a variety of different kinds of careers? How does anthropology help us to understand the complicated globalized world that we live in?

***Anthropology and public life: working for governments and NGOs***

What kinds of work have anthropologists do in governments and NGO? Think tanks and consultants? What are some examples of current anthropologists working in these careers? What are the particular challenges and opportunities of this kinds of work?

Geilhufe, Nancy L (1979) Anthropology and Policy Analysis. *Current Anthropology* 20(3): 577-579

Murray, Gerald F. (1987) The domestication of wood in Haiti: a case study in applied evolution. In *Anthropological Praxis*. Eds Robert M Wulff and Shirley J. Fiske. Westview Press.

Omidian, Patricia. A (2009) Living and working in a war zone: an applied anthropologist in Afghanistan. *Practicing Anthropology* 31(2): 4-11.

***Anthropologists and corporations: selling out?***

What kinds of work have anthropologists do in corporations? What are some examples of current anthropologists working in these careers? What are the particular challenges and opportunities of this kinds of work?

Malefyt, Timothy de Waal and Robert J. Morais (2012) Introduction. In. *Advertising and Anthropology: ethnographic practices and cultural perspectives*. Berg.

Parekh, Rupert (2011) For cultural anthropologist Kate Barrett, a day at the agency is field research. *Ad Age*: <http://adage.com/article/agency-news/anthropologist-kate-barrett-brought-skills-olson/227234/>

Cefkin, Melissa, ed. (2010) *Ethnography and the corporate encounter: reflections on research in and out of corporations* (studies in public and applied anthropology). (selections)