

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology - Honors

Fall 2011

ANT 302H

Unique # 30900

SAC 4.118

MWF 9am-10am

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Office hours: Wednesdays 8am-9am

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232-1560

I. Course description:

This course is an intensive introduction to in cultural anthropology: the comparative, ethnographic study of human social life, culture, and global diversity of the lived experience. Students will be exposed to the fundamental ideas, theories, research methods, and styles of interpretation and analysis used in the discipline. An overarching goal of the course is not only to read and write about the lives of people from other places in the world, but it is also to provide new models for considering why our own lives unfold as they do. Throughout the course, we will also be emphasizing the role of culture change over time, with a particular focus on the relationship between global capital and local practice.

Required Texts (for purchase at the Co-op Bookstore)

Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology (4th Edition) by Robert Lavenda and Emily Schultz.

Don't Sleep, There are Snakes by Daniel Everett

Guests of the Sheikh by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea

Cuba in the Shadow of Change by Amelia Rosenberg Weinreb

My Freshman Year by Rebekah Nathan

Note: a required course pack is available for purchase at Abel's Copies

(located at University Towers, 715D West 23rd St.)

II. Course components and objectives:

Components

- 1) Reading foundational and contemporary ethnographies from around the world to anchor our discussions; choosing one ethnography to read and analyze independently for the final paper.
- 2) Discussing core topics in cultural anthropology, including: ritual, religion and belief systems; language and symbolism; gender roles, kinship and the family; subsistence and economic systems; power, authority and social inequality; definitions of modernization and progress; nationalism, formation of publics and social conflict/violence; and multiculturalism, transnationalism and globalization.
- 3) Applying anthropological concepts such as cultural construction, cultural relativism, situated knowledge and creativity and agency to the analysis of ethnography and in the design of basic theoretical frameworks.
- 4) Each student will also pick several specific analytic concepts from a hat and be "in charge" of mastering those concepts during the semester. Students will do this through learning to

recognize the use of their core terms in ethnographic texts, and by being able to provide illustrative examples of the terms in class discussions and in their own writing.

5) Taking part in an in-class methods practicum in order to gain first-hand experience in conducting participant observation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, taking/organizing field notes, and finally, writing ethnographic descriptions based on these data-collection techniques.

Summary of Objectives

- 1) To gain a solid grounding in fundamental concepts in sociocultural anthropology.
- 2) To explore a wide range of specific ethnographic case studies through reading, discussion and writing assignments.
- 3) To practice basic research methodologies through first-hand experience.
- 4) To master core terms and be able to apply them proficiently in writing and analysis.
- 5) To gain a critical appreciation of the influence of culture and society on human behavior.

III. Format

This course is designed to be a smaller-scale seminar for motivated liberal arts honors students with an active interest in cultural anthropology. It is run as series of lively, fast-paced, interactive meetings in which students are encouraged to articulate and synthesize ideas with clarity, accuracy and sensitivity, and defend positions through evidence based on a common reading list. Discussion leaders, designated weekly, will raise questions, stimulate debate, and integrate ideas from the readings and core topics into our collective analysis. I will be asking for your feedback regularly so there is an open flow of communication and room for improvement during the semester.

Note on attendance, contribution, and classroom vibe: Regular attendance is not only the key to your own success as a student in this course, but also for the quality of the course as a dynamic whole. Arriving late and leaving early disrupts class flow, so make every effort to arrive to class on time with your materials prepared and phones and computers, etc. off. This is a low-tech, highly interpersonal seminar.

IV. Course Requirements and Percentage of Final Grade:

- 1) Regular, active intellectually rigorous participation in seminar component: 15%
- 2) Discussion leadership, including graded reading summary and response on day you lead 15%
- 3) Two take-home quizzes analyzing readings (10 short analytic essay questions): 20%
- 4) Three in-class quizzes on anthropological vocabulary, history and theory: 30%
- 5) A final written essay, integrating all course components through the analysis of : 20%

IMPORTANT NOTE ON ABSENCES: After 1 absence (no questions asked), your final grade will be lowered two percentage points for each additional absence after that.

The weekly cycle normally looks like this:

Mon- An instructor-led discussion establishes the context and background for the readings and outlines their key data, arguments and ideas in the reading.

Wed- A small team of students, delegated in advance, will facilitate the discussion along with the instructor, raising questions, stimulating debate, and integrating ideas from the readings into the collective analysis.

Fri- Summary and review of readings, small group-work

V. Writing Assignments:

- **Reading responses:** When you lead discussion (with your group), each individual in that group will write a two-page (12 pt. font, double spaced) summary response to the reading for that day. The responses must have: a) At least one page is a summary of the reading that identifies the thesis of the section you read; b) s second page that include reflections, reactions, critical commentaries or overviews; and c) Three questions, based in or inspired by the readings, to stimulate class discussion and debate. The two-page typed responses will be turned in class on those **Wednesdays** that students lead discussion, and are marked on the course schedule below. Note: Reading response papers must be turned in on time and cannot be made up at the end of the course.
- **Final paper:** a 7-10 page (12 pt. font, double spaced) analysis paper on the ethnography of your choice (rubric posted on Blackboard)

VI. Grading

Grades will be based on the following scale:

- A** 95-100% Excellent grasp of subject matter; explains concepts clearly; provides relevant details and examples; draws clear and interesting connections, exceptionally original, coherent and well-organized; ideas clearly written/stated, outstanding classroom participation
- A-** 90-94% Very good grasp of subject matter; explains concepts clearly; provides relevant details and examples; draws clear connections; ideas clearly written/stated
- B+** 86-89% Good grasp of some elements above, others need work
- B** 83-85% Satisfactory grasp of some elements above
- B-** 80-82% Uneven, spotty grasp of the elements above
- C+** 76-79 % Limited grasp of the above
- C** 73-75% Poor grasp of the above
- C-** 70-72% Very poor grasp of the above
- D** 60-69% Little evidence of grasp of material, having done readings, attended class, or completed assignments
- F** 0-59% No evidence of having done readings, attended class, or completed assignments

VII. Important notes on grading and participation:

Complete written assignments on time: I am committed to returning assignments to you promptly so you can benefit from my feedback while material is fresh in your mind. I do not grade papers or exams until I have the entire printed set in front of me. For these reasons, **I do not accept late assignments.** Bring a hard copy at the beginning of class on the day it is due. If you anticipate a problem, or have a history of deadline problems, meet with a consultant at the learning or writing center to help you plan ahead.

The UT Learning Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/>

Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Grading policy: I am very happy to discuss how you may improve your work, and will read early drafts, but **I will not reconsider grades on papers or quizzes.** I grade all the papers in a set at the same time to ensure that I am applying the same standards, and I make every effort to be fair.

Plagiarism and copying: Although this course is designed for creative, individual work and synthesis of ideas from various sources (it would be hard to cheat in the conventional sense of the word), any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit must be the

student's own work. Should copying occur from another student, both the student who copied work and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment.

Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

Here are University statements about plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarizing.

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/faculty/plagiarism/preventing.html>

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/>

Using office hours, getting help: I check email regularly, and will usually reply to emails within 24 hours for basic questions, and no longer than three days for more complicated ones. My door is open from 10am-11am on Mondays and Wednesdays. Ask for an appointment if you can't come in during my regular hours.

VIII. University Notices and Policies

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

In this course, that means we will all work to ensure that the discussion space is shared relatively equally among the participants, and to maintain an atmosphere of respect for each other's perspectives and arguments, especially when there are strong disagreements.

Students with disabilities Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Please contact me as early in the semester as possible to let me know if you need anything to participate fully.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, students are required to notify me of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will certainly give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

IX. Key dates at-a-glance:

Plan ahead!

W 9/1: Quiz #1

W 9/28: Quiz #2

F 10/28: Quiz #3

W 11/21: Quiz #4

W 11/30: Final Core Concepts Quiz

F 12/2: FINAL PAPER DUE

X. Tentative Course Schedule: ***This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.*

Date	Main Topic(s)	Work to do at home Readings – to be completed before class	Evaluation
W 8/24	Introduction to this class and its structure; choosing concepts from a hat, and analyzing a common artifact.		
F 8/26	How do I learn about Culture? Introduction to the 4 fields, place of cultural anthropology.	Read <i>Core Concepts</i> , Chapters 1-2;	syllabus: type up: a) what surprises you; b) what you look forward to; c) what you most dread
M 8/29	Anthropology in the news	Be prepared to summarize, discuss and workshop your article	Bring current (2011) newspaper article on anything to do with anthropology
W 9/31	✂ Student-led Classics,	Read selections from <i>Classic Edition: Sources</i> in bulk pack: p. Selection 1-3; 5-6; 11; 23-24.	
F 9/2	✂ Student-led , Trivial Pursuits	Continue <i>Classic Edition: Sources</i> in bulk pack selections 12; 14; 15; 23-24; 27-28.	In class Trivial Pursuits; submit quiz questions over discussion board
M 9/5	LABOR DAY HOLIDAY NO CLASS		What would you like to see on the quiz? Post on discussion board by 5pm
W 9/7			Quiz #1 , In-class covering introductory concepts.
F 9/9	Ethnography: <i>Don't Sleep there are Snakes</i>	<i>Don't Sleep</i> Part I <i>Don't Sleep</i> for discussion	
M 9/12	<i>Snakes</i>	<i>Don't Sleep</i> , parts 2-3 for discussion	
W 9/14	✂ Student-led discussion wrap up <i>Snakes</i>	Chapters 6 to end	
F 9/16	Religion and Belief	Read Chapter 4-5 in <i>Core Concepts</i>	

M 9/19	<i>Guests of the Sheik</i>	<i>Guests</i> Parts I	
W 9/21	✕ Student-led discussion on <i>Guests</i>	<i>Guests</i> Part II	
F 9/23	<i>Guests</i>	<i>Guests</i> Part III	
M 9/26	Wrap-up	<i>Guests</i> Part IV-VI	What would you like to see on the quiz? Post on discussion board by 5pm
W 9/28	Film/Fun activity		Quiz #2 Due Take-Home
F 9/30	ROSH HA SHANAH HOLIDAY NO CLASS		
M 10/3	Methodology and field projects: Overview of participant observation, interviewing, fieldnotes	Read course pack items:- <i>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes</i> Preface, ch. 1-2;	
W 10/5	✕ Student-led discussion <i>Writing Ethnographic</i>	<i>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes</i> , ch. 3-4	
F 10/7	Taking fieldnotes workshop		
M 10/10	Workshop on research questions		Come with a research question to discuss; Due: field notes typed up and vignette
W 10/12	✕ Student-led discussion on social organization	Read <i>Core Concepts</i> chapter 6	
F 10/14	NO CLASS SUKKOT HOLIDAY OBSERVED		
M 10/17	Political Anthropology, Economic Anthropology	<i>Core Concepts</i> Chapters 7-8	
W 10/19	✕ Student-led discussion on <i>Cuba</i>	<i>Cuba Intro 1</i>	
F 10/21	NO CLASS SIMCHAT TORAH OBSERVED		
M 10/24	<i>Cuba</i>	<i>Cuba</i> Chapters 2-6	
W 10/26	✕ Student-led discussion on <i>Cuba</i>	<i>Cuba</i> Chapters 7-9	What would you like to see on the quiz? Post on discussion board by 5pm
F 10/28	Film/Fun activity		Quiz #3 Take-Home
M 10/31	✕ Kinship and Marriage	<i>Core Concepts</i> Chapters 9-10	Student-led Trivial Pursuits, Select individual ethnography for

			approval
W 11/2	✂ Student-led The Concept of Race	Taking sides debate on race	
F 11/4	<i>Race in the 21st Century</i>	<i>Race</i> , Chapters 3-4	
M 11/7	<i>Race in the 21st Century</i>	<i>Race</i> , Chapters 5-6	
W 11/9	✂ Student-led My Freshman Year	<i>Freshman</i> , Chapters 1-2	
F 11/12		<i>Freshman</i> , Chapters 3-5	
M 11/16		<i>Freshman</i> , Chapters 6-7, afterword	
F 11/18	NO CLASS: AAA Meetings		What would you like to see on the quiz? Post on discussion board by 5pm
M 11/21			Quiz #4, In-class
W 11/23	Preparation for final quiz, final paper		
F 11/25	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY NO CLASS		
M 11/28	TBA		
W 11/30			FINAL QUIZ: CORE CONCEPTS
F 12/2	Informal student presentations. Final party with food, secret Santa exchange		DUE: FINAL PAPERS