

Auburn University Montgomery Department of Sociology
ANTH 2110B Cultural Anthropology Fall 2004

Tuesday, Thursday (09:30 A.M. - 10:45 A.M.)
310TW

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Hours: Mon., Tue., Wed., Thurs. 08:15 AM – 09:15 AM
Other times by appointment

Description

This course will introduce you to the basic concepts and methods in the study of culture and human socialization. You will read ethnographies and excerpts from ethnographies and compare and analyze culture as represented by human behavior and ideology, *weltanschauung*, in both industrial and traditional societies. We will employ a variety of perspectives about the nature of culture to examine how various societies adapt to different physical and social environments. You will study how cultural anthropologists employ the ethnographic method to understand why certain patterns of behavior exist in societies and discover how various institutions work, whom they benefit, the types of symbols involved and what they say to participants, and how they help individuals adapt to social and other demands placed upon them.

Required Texts

Nanda, Serena, and Richard Warms
2004 Cultural Anthropology, 8th edition.
Allen, John L., and Audrey C. Shalinsky
2004 Student Atlas of Anthropology

Learning Goals/Objectives

By the end of the semester, you should understand the role of each sub-discipline of anthropology in the study of the human condition. You will gain exposure to many cultures that differ significantly in their ideas about how humans should live among and interact with each other and learn how cultural anthropologists deal with problems they encounter in the field. Throughout the semester you have several opportunities to demonstrate your mastery of course information and critically apply your understanding in examinations, research projects, and class discussions.

Course Requirements

There will be two (2) map quizzes and three (3) examinations during the semester. Individual map quizzes account for five percent of your grade. Examinations count as 20 percent each and cover all materials from the texts, lectures, slide presentations, and videos. You earn the remaining 30 percent through class participation, short written exercises, and completion of a paper and oral presentation of a selected research topic relevant to the course. A description of the required research project is attached to this syllabus. Completion of **ALL** course examinations and assignments is compulsory. If you miss a scheduled examination, a make-up (essay or short-answer format) will be considered only upon receipt of a written explanation for your absence. You must arrange to take the make-up test by the next regularly scheduled class period after the examination. To withdraw, follow the procedures published in the AUM catalog or schedule of classes.

Americans with Disabilities

The School of Liberal Arts makes every effort to accommodate the special needs of students with respect to speech, hearing, vision, seating, or other potential disabling conditions as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1990. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible of any accommodations or special needs require. In order for accommodations to be made, a student must register with the AUM Center for Special Services 244-3754.

A student who wishes to withdraw from the course or has missed too many classes must complete the standard process for dropping a class by the withdrawal date for the term (which is published in the current AUM Catalog and in the current Schedule of Classes).

Attendance

Arrive on time and be in attendance for the entire class period. Class lectures cover important information not found in assigned readings. If you arrive late for class, please move to your seat without disturbing other class members. Frequent absences and late arrivals will result in poor performance and grades. Attendance verification for students on federal grant programs or loans is observed. There will be a minimum of four random attendance quizzes throughout the semester. Each counts as .25 points on your final grade. Therefore, perfect attendance will earn you one percent on your final grade.

Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration on research papers, use of unreferenced Internet materials, and cheating will result in an automatic "F" for academic dishonesty, an unforgivable offense under AUM policy. Should you need further clarification, feel free to contact me, or read the information on the topic provided in the AUM Aumanac.

How to do well in this course

1) Attend all classes.

2) Come to class prepared. Read the assignments carefully and take notes in class. Write down any questions you might have about the readings and raise them in class. Do not hesitate to participate actively in class and engage other students or the instructor in class discussions. Pose questions, make comments and think critically.

3) Develop your writing skills. Since you will be graded on written exams and papers, good writing skills are essential. If you cannot express yourself well in writing, your poor writing skills will affect your grade. Feel free to contact me for suggestions or visit the learning center, 324 Moore Hall. Call 244-3470 to schedule an appointment for this free service.

Grade Scale

90 – 100% = A

80 - <90% = B

70 - <80% = C

60 - <70% = D

<60% = F

Letter grades are based upon the following guidelines.

A: Reserved for exceptional scholarship and understanding that reaches beyond minimum course requirements.

B: Excellent above average work that exceeds minimum course requirements.

C: Satisfactory completion of course requirements.

D: Fails to address course requirements satisfactorily.

F: You really have to work hard to achieve this grade.

E-mail

E-mail is an excellent means to communicate outside the classroom. I am eager to answer your questions. Feel free to contact me regarding anything having to do with the course or other academic interests.

Web CT

A course web page is provided where you can find the syllabus, lecture notes, slide presentations and links for relevant topics. I encourage you to register for the course webpage.

Test Schedule

Map Quizzes	TBA one week notice.
First Partial Examination	Tuesday, September 28.
Second Partial Examination	Tuesday, November 02.
Final Examination	Thursday, December 16 (08:00 A.M. – 10:30 A.M.).

Holidays:

Thanksgiving, November 25 - 26

Schedule of Topics and Readings from the text (subject to revision)

- Topic #1 **Anthropology**
Introduction to course requirements - No readings
Chapter 1: Anthropology and Human Diversity, pp. 1-17.
Borshay Lee, Richard (1969) "Eating Christmas in the Kalahari." *Annual Editions* 25: 23-26.
- Topic #2 **Human Origins**
Chapter 2: Human Evolution, pp. 18-47.
Bogin, Barry (1998) "The tall and the Short of It." *Discover*. 196-199. (hand out)
- Topic #3 **In the Field**
Chapter 3: Doing Cultural Anthropology, pp. 48-69.
Chagnon, Napoleon A. (1992) "Doing Fieldwork Among the Yanomamo." *Annual Editions* 25: 2-13.
- Topic #4 **Anthropological Ideas**
Chapter 4: The Idea of Culture, pp. 70-91.
Appendix: A Chronology of Theories of Culture, pp. 412-418.
Boas, Franz (1896): "Limitations of the Comparative Method." *Science*, N.S., vol. 4: 901-908. (hand out)
- Topic #5 **Language**
Chapter 5: Language, pp. 92-121.
Sampat, Payal (2001) "Last Words" *Annual Editions* vol.25: 213-216.
Video: "Yeah you rite."
- Topic #6 **Culture, Society, and Socialization: Continuity and Discontinuity**
Chapter 6: Learning Culture Throughout Life, pp. 122-143.
Scheper-Hughes (1989) "Death Without Weeping." *Annual Editions* 25: 100-104.
Small, Meredith F. (1997) "Our Babies, Ourselves." *Annual Editions* 25: 105-111.
- Topic #7 **Lifeways**
Chapter 7: Making a Living, pp. 144-167.
Fagan, Brian (1999) "Drought Follows the Plow." *Annual Editions* 25: 196-201.
- Topic #8 **Money**
Chapter 8: Economics, pp. 168-193.
Counts, David (1990) "Too Many Bananas, Not Enough Pineapples, and No Watermelon at All: Three Object Lessons in Living with Reciprocity." *Annual Editions* 25: 85-88.
- Topic #9 **Love and marriage go together like a...**
Chapter 9: Marriage, Family, and Domestic Groups, pp. 194-217.
Goldstein, Melvyn C. (1987) "When Brothers Share a Wife." *Annual Editions* 25: 96-99.

- Topic #10 **Kinship and Lineage**
Chapter 10: Kinship, pp. 218-239.
- Topic #11 **Gender**
Chapter 11: Gender pp. 240-261.
Friedl, Ernestine (1978) "Society and Sex Roles." *Annual Editions* 25: 127-132.
- Topic #12 **Religion, Magic, and Superstition**
Chapter 15 Religion, pp. 334-363.
de Grasse Tyson, Neil (1999) "Holy Wars." *Annual Editions* 25: 179-181.
Saitoti, Tepilit Ole (1986) "the Initiation of a Maasai Warrior." *Annual Editions* 25: 145-149.
- Topic #13 **Our Place in Society**
Chapter 13: Social Stratification in Contemporary Societies: Class, Caste, and Race, pp. 286-307.
Chapter 14: Ethnicity, 308-333.
- Topic #14 **Civilization**
Chapter 12: Political Organization, pp. 262-285.
Chapter 16: The Arts: Expressing Cultural Identities, pp. 364-383.
Bodley, John H. (1998) "Progress and Indigenous Peoples," In *Victims of Progress*. pp. 12-29. (hand out)
Chapter 17: Cultural Change, pp. 384-411.
Lappe, Frances Moore and Joseph Collins (1997) "Why Can't People Feed Themselves?" *Annual Editions* 25: 184-188.
Diamond, Jared (1992) "The Arrow of Disease." *Annual Editions* 25: 189-195.
- Topic #15 **Instructor's Field Research**

Chapters scheduled above refer to Nanda and Warms. Articles listed by author are posted on Web CT. You are not required to read all the articles. Readings will be assigned to groups for in-class discussion. I will keep you informed about your specific responsibilities as the semester progresses. Throughout the semester you will receive additional assignments or exercises not listed in the schedule of topics and readings that are focused on the Student Atlas of Anthropology.

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RESEARCH

Your research assignment consists of a written paper and oral presentation to be completed during the final two weeks of the semester. You are to utilize the audiovisual technology available in the classroom to report on life within another culture or subculture, substantially different from your own. Your topic must cover either a life crisis or a significant symbolic system of people from another culture. The assignment is to describe events surrounding the working out of, or conflict around, your selected topic. As an anthropologist you should describe and explain the cultural behavior or pattern, and as a member of the culture in question, you should reveal what you experience, how you would behave, and why. Do not select a culture with which you are already familiar. The purpose of this assignment is to investigate something new and unknown.

In order to carry out your research successfully, you should consult two kinds of literature: popular literature both from and about "your" culture including but not limited to autobiographies diaries, newspaper, magazine articles, and novels, the Internet with extreme caution, and anthropological literature such as ethnographies and/or articles in scholarly peer-reviewed journals such as American Anthropologist, Current Anthropology, The Journal of Anthropological Research, and Man, to name a few.

To the extent possible, try to become a member of the culture you select. Attempt to see the institution you have chosen to study exactly like a member of that culture sees it, or at the very least, get as close to the insider's perspective as you can. Describe your perceptions of the institution and how people in your culture learn about it, justify and explain it. Explain the institution in a way that an outsider might come to understand the reasons for the behavior or patterns of relationships involved and why it is so highly valued. Accomplish this by answering how the institution works, why is it adaptive, who does it help, what kinds of symbols are involved and what are they saying to the participants, and how does it help the people of your culture adapt to the social and other demands placed upon them. You might find it helpful to employ ethnographic methods by consulting a living informant from your culture. After you have read and are familiar with the institution you select, ask your informant to describe it in her or his own words and then to explain it to you.

Review the examples in the list provided below and select a topic. I must approve your choice before you begin your research. Feel free to consult me concerning the organization of your paper as well. Your paper and oral presentation represents 20 percent of your total grade for the course. You will be evaluated on how well you carry out your assignment, the quality and breadth of your independent research, the depth of your analysis, your understanding of the culture under study, the degree to which you demonstrate an understanding of the anthropological concepts introduced during the semester and apply them to your analysis, and your imagination and creativity in presenting the information. Composition, neatness and proof reading are also considered. Your oral presentation will be 5 to 7 minutes in length. You may use as much creativity as possible in presenting your culture and institution. You might wish to perform your paper with another person in class. The written paper is due on or before the final day of class. Use one of the citation methods approved by the Department of English at Auburn University Montgomery. Papers are to be no more than 10 pages, have one inch margins, double-spaced typed or word-processed, and include both a cover page and a reference page. Your paper must be an original printed copy, not a photocopy. Do not waste your money on binders. Instead, use one staple in the upper left hand corner. You may include maps, illustrations, and/or photos to enhance your presentation. If you wish to have your paper returned with comments, submit two copies.

SUGGESTED PAPER TOPICS

Your assignment focuses upon the most symbolic aspects of human culture. The religious rituals of almost any culture, not your own, will do. So will the art, sculpture, performance, cosmology or the architecture of a culture. Do not attempt to account for the entirety of the religion or art. Rather, focus on an interrelated set of practices (a cultural tradition).

1. Haitian vodun. The beliefs and rituals of a single pantheon or cult (Afrique-Guiné).
2. Haitian zombiism. The death and resurrection of human victims.
3. Magical Death among the Australian Aborigines, or elsewhere.
4. A coming-of-age ceremony among traditional African or Sudanese society (male or female).
5. The Indian suttee, widow immolation.
6. A faith-healing among Christian Scientists or others. Does it work, and if so, how?
7. Chinese homeopathic medicine, its theory and curing practices.
8. Ritual relaxation of the incest taboo, Amazonia or elsewhere.
9. Creationism among American fundamentalists.
10. The Vision Quest among American Plains Indians.
11. The ritual torture and execution of prisoners of war among American Indians or others.
12. Joining the leader death phenomenon. For example, ritual poisoning and burial of faithful retainers, wives, and concubines on the death of a king (Mesopotamia, China...)
13. The use of Protestant religion to justify chattel slavery of Africans by a Southern planter, or to justify separation of the races by a Ku Klux Klan member.
14. You are a South African Boer defending racial Apartheid with religion.
15. The art of Nbdelle women of South Africa.
16. The bronze art of the Ife and Benin cultures of West Africa.
17. Jamaican (Trinidadian...) Rastafarian. You believe white men are devils and that marijuana is God's gift to his chosen people.
18. You are an American witch.
19. You are a Hare-Krishna cultist (or other similar sect).
20. You are a member of a religious cult that believes that pain, self-torture, and mutilations provide the only true access to God.
21. You are a member of a Protestant West Virginia church that encourages the handling of live rattlesnakes and the drinking of poison during its services. One member has died. Will you continue?
22. In your society, males are regarded more highly than females. You just found out that your unborn child is a girl and feel compelled to abort.
23. You are considering body piercing. What does it mean? Is it art?
24. You are and African maker of masks. What do the masks mean to you and your people?
25. The totem pole. What did it mean? Should they be preserved as monuments by Christina Native Americans?
26. You are a Zuni or Navajo healer using sand paintings and chanting to cure sick patients.
27. Aztec sacrifice and cannibalism.
28. You are a Masai wife and your husband has just asked you about marrying his best friends newborn daughter.
29. You are a Tibetan husband and your brother has just asked to marry your wife.
30. You are wrongfully accused of killing a villager's cow and must go through an ordeal to prove your innocence.