

INTRODUCTION TO ANTHROPOLOGY

SOC 200

FALL 2004



"Anthropologists! Anthropologists!"

We are . . .incomplete and unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture— and not through culture in general but through highly particular forms of it: . . .Hopi and Italian, upper-class and lower-class, academic and commercial. Clifford Geertz.

The purpose of anthropology is to make the world safe for human differences. Ruth Benedict.

Required Books

1. Richard B. Lee *The Dobe Ju'hoansi*. Third Edition. Wadsworth (Ju'/Hoansi)
2. Ann Fadiman *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. Farrar, Giroux and Strauss. (Fadiman)
3. McCurdy and Spradley, *Conformity and Conflict, Readings in Cultural Anthropology*. Eleventh Edition. Allyn and Bacon. (Reader)

Course Description

This course introduces you to the discipline of anthropology through the concept of "culture." The word "culture" will take on some special meanings in this course and provoke you to think about it in new ways. Some basic questions that define this course are as follows: What is the nature of human nature? How does the concept of "culture" help us to understand human nature? Why and how do anthropologists get into the business of studying cultures? How can an anthropological perspective help us reflect on contemporary global problems?

Disclaimer: This is not meant to be a comprehensive introduction to the field of anthropology. It is primarily a course in cultural anthropology (one of the four sub-fields of anthropology) and will not address issues in linguistics, archeology or paleoanthropology. No bones about it! :-)

Archaeology Enthusiasts! Don't despair. Although this class will not deal with archaeology, you have several opportunities to attend interesting archaeology lectures on campus. I will announce them in class.

Course Goals

1. To explore cultural diversity through an anthropological perspective on culture
2. To understand key concepts and major theoretical perspectives in the study of culture
3. To learn about cultures through original ethnographic texts
4. To emphasize critical thinking skills in reading ethnographic texts
5. To apply anthropological ideas to understand culture in everyday life
6. To write about culture from an anthropological perspective

Assessment of Course Goals

Critical thinking and mastery of course content will be measured through multiple choice and Short Essay Exams will test student comprehension of content

Critical thinking in research and writing will be assessed through essay assignments that involve critical review of popular films or current events..

Exams/Assignments

<u>THREE Exams</u> (including FINAL which is not comprehensive): 25% each	TOTAL
Multiple Choice and short essays.	75%
ONE Current Event OR Film Analysis Paper	20%
Attendance	5%

COURSE POLICIES AND CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Requests:

Arrivals and Departures: Please respect the classroom, the instructor and fellow students by avoiding inappropriate or disruptive behavior. For example, avoid walking in late to a class (10 to 20 minutes after class has begun) or walking out early for no legitimate reason.

Talking: It is not rude to talk with fellow students during a class discussion. However, it can be disruptive to students and the instructor if you carry on private conversations with friends in the classroom during a lecture.

Electronic Devices: Absolutely no cell phones and beepers allowed in class. PLEASE TURN THEM OFF.

Policies:

Planned and Unplanned Absences: Absences will be noted and may count toward final grade decisions. If you miss lecture periods you are likely to miss important information not found in the text and instructions regarding exams and papers. If you plan to miss a lot of classes, the best thing is to DROP THE CLASS BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE or be prepared to face the consequences of your absences.

Make-Up Exams: I will give NO MAKE-UP EXAMS if you miss an exam period. Examples of poor excuses for missing exams include– sleeping late, forgetting deadlines, not having time to study, having to complete assignments for another class, fear of exams, vague “personal problems.”

Academic Honesty: includes plagiarism and cheating and is subject to penalties outlined in the Student Handbook. Since plagiarism is sometimes unintentional and difficult to understand, I am willing to help you learn proper ways to write and avoid plagiarism. If in doubt, ask!

Contacting Me: I am always available during office hours in my office. Please be aware of these hours, which are posted on the front page of your syllabus. If these times are not good for you, then you can make an appointment with me by email or by phone. Email is good for simple questions or for setting up appointments. I would encourage you to see me in person regarding questions that require more discussion on our part.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

Week One

INTRODUCTION

Questions: What is cultural anthropology? What are the most important questions in this discipline? How does anthropology differ from other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences? What are some topics to be explored in this course?

H. Miner, Body Ritual Among the Nacirema (to be distributed in class)

HOLIDAY

Week Two

Culture and Ethnocentrism

Questions: How do people perceive each other across cultures? What are the sources and consequences of biases or misunderstandings (ethnocentrism)? What is culture? How is it different from the concept of race? How do anthropologists examine the concept of race?

Film: *Becoming American*

Ann Fadiman, Spirit Catches You..pgs.1-37.

Week Three

Concept of Culture

The origins of cultural anthropology, various definitions and approaches to the study of cultural diversity.

Reading: McCurdy and Spradley, #38 “Using Anthropology” p.415.

Cultural Relativism and Universalism

Questions: What are the similarities and differences across cultures and societies? What is cultural relativism and how is it related to ethnocentrism? Is cultural relativism equivalent to moral relativism? How do these issues relate to contemporary human rights debates?

Readings:

McCurdy and Spradley, #3 Laura Bohanan Shakespeare in the Bush

McCurdy and Spradley # 20 “Death Without Weeping”

Cultural Relativism Contd.

James Rachels The Challenge of Cultural Relativism(ON RESERVE)

Week Four

Anthropological Methods: Fieldwork/Ethnography

Questions: What unique methodologies are employed by anthropologists in their study of cultures? Is anthropology a science or an art or both? What are the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research using participant observation? What issues are raised by fieldwork at home vs. fieldwork abroad? Does it matter if the anthropologist is native or foreign?

Film: *A Man Called Bee*

Readings: McCurdy and Spradley, # 1 “Ethnography and Culture” p.7

Lee, *Ju’/hoansi* Chapter 1 & Appendix A “Eating Christmas in the Kalahari”

McCurdy and Spradley, #5 “Lessons from the Field”

Week Five

Ethnographies

Questions: What is an ethnography and how is it different from ethnology? What are some challenges in writing ethnographies? How have ethnographies varied historically? How do we evaluate an ethnography in terms of its claims to validity, reliability and generalizability?

Readings: McCurdy and Spradley, #4 “Fieldwork in the Era of Prostitution” p. 33

FIRST EXAM

Week Six

Theoretical Approaches: Materialism.

Questions: What is a theory and what theoretical perspectives do anthropologists apply to understand cultures? What are some key differences between cultural idealism and cultural materialism as two major theoretical paradigms? How do they differ in terms of how they view culture and human nature? How can we identify the two approaches in anthropologists’ works?

Marvin Harris, *India’s Sacred Cow* (ON RESERVE)

Marvin Harris, “Cultural Materialism is Alive and Well...” (ON RESERVE)

Week Seven

Cultural Ecology

Readings: Richard Lee, *Ju’/hoansi* Begin reading Chapter 2 & 3

McCurdy and Spradley #12 “Adaptive Failure: Easter’s End”

Week Eight

Political Economy

Questions: How does Lee’s ethnography illustrate a materialist approach to culture? What are some general characteristics of Hunter-gatherer societies? Where do the Ju’/Hoansi fit into anthropological debates about foraging societies? How do materialist/economic approaches help in ethnological studies of cultural differences?

Readings: Richard Lee, *Ju’/hoansi* Chapter 4 & Chapter 8

Readings: McCurdy and Spradley # 31, “Life without Chiefs” p.327.

Week Nine

Cultural Idealism

Questions: How does Lansing take a cultural idealist approach in the introduction to Balinese culture? How does he explain Balinese concepts of time, space and identity and how are these different from American concepts of these phenomenon? How is religion tied to other aspects of life in Balinese culture?

Film: *Three Worlds of Bali*

Ju'Hoansi, Chapter 9

Week Ten

Religion, Healing and Culture

Questions: How do healing systems in other cultures differ from western biomedicine? What is relationship between religion/spirituality and healing in western and non-western cultural contexts? How do cultures accommodate and/or resist belief systems and healing practices of other cultures? How can an anthropological perspective assist physicians and other medical personnel in dealing with cultural conflicts in their professional practice?

Ann Fadiman, *Spirit Catches You*: pgs. 38-92

Ann Fadiman, *Spirit Catches You*: pgs 93-118; 140-153; 171-180.

Week Eleven

Ethnic and National Identities

What is ethnicity? How is it different from other identities? What do we mean when we say "ethnicity is constructed"?

Ann Fadiman, pgs 181-end.

McCurdy and Spradley, # 27 Blood on the Steppes: Ethnicity, Power and conflict.

SECOND EXAM

Week Twelve

Kinship and Marriage

Questions: How do we define marriage and family/kinship to take account of the diversity of forms worldwide? Are marriage and family universal institutions? Why is kinship central to anthropological studies and non-industrial societies? What does cross-cultural variation in marriage and family forms teach us about trends in American society?

Readings:

McCurdy and Spradley #21 Family and Kinship in Village India

McCurdy and Spradley #22 Matrilineal Kinship: Walking Marriage in China

Film: TBA

Week Thirteen

Sex and Gender

Questions: How do anthropologists approach the study of gender equality? What challenges are posed by cross-cultural comparisons of gender roles? How do materialist and idealist approaches to gender equality explain inequality within and across cultures?

Readings:

McCurdy and Spradley #25 Society and Sex Roles

PAPER ASSIGNMENT DUE 29th

McCurdy and Spradley #24 Symbolizing Roles: Behind the Veil

Week Fourteen

Globalization and Cultural Change

Questions: What is globalization? How is this related to changes in cultures today? How do cultures change? Is change inevitable? Is it necessary? Is it progressive?

Jared Diamond The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human race. (ON RESERVE)

Ju' Hoansi Last Chapters on Change

FINAL EXAM 3-5:30