Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology
Anthropology 104/Fall 2010/ Mon. & Thursday 11:10-12:20 pm /JAC 372

Professor Deborah Matzner
Office: Pendleton East 344
Office Hours: Tues.10-12 or by appointment
Phone: 781-283-2946
Email: dmatzner@wellesley.edu
Course website on Sakai.
Login with your domain username and password at https://sakai.wellesley.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course introduces students to the discipline of socio-cultural anthropology. We begin by considering some of the historical foundations of the discipline and then consider several strands of its more recent attempts to understand “culture”. We will explore ethnography, the research method that defines the discipline, reading ethnographies and anthropological writing about ethnographic practice. We will analyze ethnographies not only for what they teach us about the world, but also in terms of the ethics of their production, their claims to authority, and their theoretical innovations. Although the ethnographies investigate diverse social phenomena in disparate settings, each addresses how even the most commonsensical aspects of everyday life are informed by culture. At the same time that we identify the workings of culture not only in distant locations, but also in our lives, we will also consider the limits and problems of the “culture concept”, which can carry implicit hierarchies based on the fallacious idea of the “primitive”. While I hope that this course inspires many of you to become anthropology majors, my goal is to grant each of you an anthropological perspective on your own lives.

COURSE TEXTS These texts are available for purchase in the bookstore. One copy of each is also on reserve at Clapp Library. In addition to these books, required readings marked with an R in the Course Schedule below are available for download on the course’s Sakai website under the ‘Resources’ tab. See https://sakai.wellesley.edu.

- John L. and Jean Comaroff, 2009. Ethnicity, Inc. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Note: The Comaroff text is also available for online reading as an E-Book via the Wellesley College Library website.)

REQUIREMENTS
(1) Class Participation: (20% of your grade). This is an intensive course that requires full participation from every student. You are required to attend all scheduled class meetings, and to read all the assigned material before class. You are required to participate in
discussions in a manner that is intelligent, considerate, kind, and respectful of your fellow students and professor. In addition:

- Post one well-considered and eloquently written discussion question to the Discussion Forum on the course’s Sakai web site by 10:00 p.m. the night before each class meeting—except for days with no readings or days on which exams or papers are due. Consider not only questions pertaining to theoretical or conceptual issues that intrigued or perplexed you, but also questions that invite your fellow students’ analysis and synthesize and compare issues across readings. Come to class prepared to discuss your question.

- **Journal on Wellesley Culture: Transmission, Reproduction and Change.** Institutions like colleges tend to have their own, distinct cultures, which they maintain even though an entirely new group of people arrives and another leaves every year. How is that culture transmitted and reproduced, despite this turnover in actual people? Keep a journal throughout the semester about Wellesley’s culture and your experience in its reproduction. You will turn this journal in for review on Sept. 20, Oct. 18, and Nov. 4. You will use this journal to write a collaborative Term Paper.

Specific assignments for the journal will be announced in class. Beyond these specific assignments, you should write on the following questions throughout the semester: If you are a first year student, take note of how you, as a cultural novice, are socialized into Wellesley’s culture: How you are taught the spoken and unspoken rules of behavior and ideologies of the institution and/or the town? How does your perspective change over the course of the semester? If you are not a first year student, try to take a look at Wellesley culture from the perspective of an outsider. How do you know what the unspoken rules are? As an non-first year, how do you help to socialize first year students? Do you see the possibility of change in Wellesley’s culture? For both first year and non-first year students: Relate your experience to the readings for the course. Please note that while this is a “journal”, you should employ eloquent, grammatically correct, spell-checked writing that fulfills the standards of the Wellesley College Writing Program.

(2) **Two Exams:** (20% of the final grade each, for a total of 40%). The exams will include material covered in class, readings, and films. The Midterm will be in-class, and the final will be take-home. The Midterm Exam will be on Oct. 25. The Final Exam will be handed out Thurs. Dec. 2nd and due in my office before 5:00 pm Thurs. Dec. 9th.

(3) **Two Papers:** (a total of 40%). More detail on each of these assignments will be conveyed later.

2. **Collaborative Term Paper** on Wellesley’s Culture (25%) Due Mon. Nov. 22: Based on your Wellesley Culture journal, you will write a 15-20 paged collaborative term paper with a small group of your classmates. This paper will resemble a co-edited special issue of a journal. While each group is encouraged to work out the division of labor involved in collaborative writing, I would suggest that you break the paper into sections, writing the introduction and conclusion collaboratively, and then
each writing a section of the body, which you then circulate among your collaborators. The papers must engage at least five of the course readings, using them to illuminate the cultural phenomena that you have observed and/or experienced this semester. All of the members of your group will receive the same grade on this paper, so it is your responsibility to ensure that each section is well written and theoretically robust.

Guidelines/Regulations

- Laptops, iPads/Pods, cell phones, and other electronic devices may NOT be used in the classroom. All electronic devices must be switched off for the duration of class (not just silenced).
- I will be available to respond to emails and phone calls only between 10:00 am and 6:00 pm on weekdays.
- More than three absences must be accompanied by a letter from a doctor or an explanation of relevant religious observance, or your participation grade will be lowered.
- Those who do not attend the first class meeting will be dropped from the course.
- Late work will not be accepted, nor will I grant extensions or incompletes; there is no January Option for this course.
- Students must abide by the Wellesley Honor Code. Plagiarism will be strictly punished. Please be aware that improper citation can constitute plagiarism. Take care to learn and follow the proper citation practices of the discipline of anthropology. See the AAA Style Guide in the Resources folder of this course’s Sakai website.
- Papers will be graded according to the standards of the Wellesley College Writing Program, which will be handed out during the first class meeting.
- Students with disabilities who require disability-related accommodations are encouraged to work with Jim Wice, the Director of Disability Services. Find Jim on the third floor of Clapp Library. If you have a disability, including a learning disability, that is undocumented, Jim will arrange for you to be tested, and for appropriate accommodations to be made.

Course Schedule


Definitions, Problematics

   Readings:
   Raymond Williams, “Culture,” in Keywords (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 87-93. R

The Anglo-American Tradition: Polygenism, Primitivism, and “Cultures”

3. Thurs. Sept. 16  Readings:


Readings:

Franz Boas, “The Methods of Ethnology” R

Fieldwork Paradigms

5. Thurs. Sept. 23 Readings:


6. Mon. Sept. 27 Readings:

7. Thurs. Sept. 30 Readings:

8. Mon. Oct. 4 In-class screening:
*Trobriand Cricket*, dir. Gary Kildea, 1975, 52 min.

Reading:

Writing and Writing Against Culture

9. Thurs. Oct. 7 Readings:


**Language, Culture and Change**

10. **Tues. Oct. 12**  
**3 page review of Trobriand Cricket Due**  
*Readings:*  


*Readings:*  
Nancy Ries, Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika, Introduction and Ch.1 pp. 1-42.  

*Recommended Reading:*  

12. **Mon. Oct. 18**  
**Submit Wellesley Journal for review.**  
*Readings:*  
Nancy Ries, Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika, chapters 2 and 3.  


13. **Thurs. Oct. 21**  
*Readings:*  
Nancy Ries, Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika, ch. 4-end.  


13. **Mon. Oct. 25**  
In-Class Midterm
Culture, Language and Gender

14. Thurs. Oct. 28  
Readings:  

The Cultural Construction of Race

15. Mon. Nov. 1  
Reading:  

16. Thurs. Nov. 4  
***Submit Journal on Wellesley Culture for review Reading:  

17. Mon. Nov. 8  
Reading:  
Elizabeth Chin, Purchasing Power, Ch. 3 and 4

18. Thurs. Nov. 11  
Reading:  
Elizabeth Chin, Purchasing Power, Ch. 5-end.

Kinship and Reproduction Reconsidered

19. Mon. Nov. 15  
Reading:  
Sarah Franklin and Susan McKinnon, “Introduction: Relative Values: Reconfiguring Kinship Studies,”  
Skim, or read closely if you have time:
Sarah Franklin, “Biologization Revisited: Kinship Theory in the Context of the New Biologies,”


Screening: Nicole Opper, dir., Off and Running: An American Coming of Age Story, 75 min., 2009.


Globalization

22. Mon. Nov. 22 *** Collaborative Essay on Wellesley Culture due at the beginning of class.
Reading:


23. Thurs. Nov. 25 NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK

The “Culture Concept” at Large: Commodifying Ethnicity

24. Mon. Nov. 29 Reading:
John L. and Jean Comaroff, 2009 Ethnicity Inc. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 1, 2, 4

25. Thurs. Dec. 2 Reading:
Ethnicity Inc. Ch. 5, 6, 7.
***Take-home Finals handed out at end of class.

26. Mon. Dec. 6 Wrap Up

27. Thurs Dec. 9 ***Take-home Finals Due in my office before 5:00.