Anthropology 104

Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology
Spring 2010
Mondays and Thursdays 11:10-12:20

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Office hours: Mondays and Thursdays 1:00-2:00 or by appointment

“Anthropology is often considered a collection of curious facts, telling about the peculiar appearance of exotic people and describing their strange customs and beliefs. It is looked upon as an entertaining diversion, apparently without any bearing upon the conduct of life of civilized communities. This opinion is mistaken. More than that, I hope to demonstrate that a clear understanding the principles of anthropology illuminates the social processes of our own times and may show is, if we are ready to listen to its teachings, what to do and what to avoid.”

Franz Boaz, Anthropology and Modern Life, 1928

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the central topics, concepts and methods of socio-cultural anthropology, which can be broadly defined as the study of human cultures and societies. This course will also provide students with knowledge and an understanding of the diversity of human cultures in the world. Readings, films and lectures are selected to address the complex and variant forces underlying human interaction and social life, and how they are revealed through the eyes of different anthropologists.

The class will begin by confronting the question of social and cultural difference: we will ask how ‘other’ peoples and cultures have been classified, understood, and represented at different times, using the island of New Guinea as a case study. We will attribute popular representations of backwardness to late nineteenth century theories of biological and social evolutionism. We will investigate how anthropologists were able to offer a debunking to these theories by emphasizing the importance of culture, language and communication, rather than skin color and race. We will then ask: how were anthropologists able to gain such first hand information about other cultures. How did the paradigmatic anthropological method of fieldwork and participant observation
emerged during the era of colonialism, and how has it changed over the years. Then we will turn our attention to the Mundurucu of Amazonia and the Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea. We will examine some of the classic topics of anthropological inquiry in these two societies: kinship, gender, family, marriage, affinity, descent, religion, economic exchange, ritual, symbolism and magic. Then we will examine the colonial experience through the story of the production, exchange and consumption of sugar. We will finish the course by looking at the emergence of the national ordering of human societies and how local relations of inequality define this global condition. Anthropology now plays an important role in challenging these new social orders, by supporting indigenous movements and developing an activist agenda. Public and Applied anthropology (such as medical anthropology) have also emerged within the discipline, and they offer non-academic venues to those who would like to use anthropological cross-cultural comparison and critique in solving contemporary problems. Overall, readings for this course aspire to familiarize students with different locations around the globe in the hopes that they will learn more about cultural diversity, social complexity and global political changes. Learning about others, Boas reminds us, helps us learn about ourselves.

**Course Objectives:**

1) Help students appreciate cultural diversity and comprehend a wide variety of social problems around the world.
2) Understand and analyze the differences and commonalities of people and societies across the world.
3) Develop the ability to think critically about what “culture” means in various contexts by doing hands-on ethnographic research fieldwork.
4) Use anthropological concepts and gain skills for critically reading and visually analyzing the world around us.

**Prerequisites:**

No prerequisites are necessary, except an open mind and a compassionate heart. The course might lead you to look at yourself and your personal history reflexively. Critical thinking and intellectual curiosity will be encouraged in the classroom, coupled with commitments to social justice and equality for all cultures in this world.

**Requirements and grade evaluation:**

Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

**Class participation (15%)**

Each student is expected to fully participate in class discussions and activities, having read the required readings ahead of time. You should all come to each class with questions and comments about the assigned readings and key concepts. Class attendance is mandatory and class participation is important. You can also post your thoughts and concerns online via the course conference (ANTH104-01-S10). You are encouraged to
come to my office hours and seek help if you need it, or advice, or just discuss the readings. Students are required to attend the field trip to Harvard’s Peabody Museum on Saturday February 20.

**Examinations (mid-term 25%)**
The objective and analytical knowledge you obtain from this class will be tested in an in-class mid-term examination and a take home final examination.

**Field research paper (30%)**
Five to seven (5-7) pages paper on an ethnographic research exercise. Students will learn about the ethnographic method through a series of small exercises on campus. You may begin this project after the mid-term. You will also have to make an in-class presentation of your project during the last two days of classes. More guidelines will be provided. Your paper is due at the end of the exam period.

**Three short responses (10% each)**
Two pages maximum response to questions about class readings, films, and events. See due dates in the syllabus

**List of Books and readings:**
The following books have been ordered for you to purchase at the Wellesley College Bookstore. The rest of the readings are on e-reserve or posted on the first class conference.


**List of Films: (on e-reserve)**
- *Bronislaw Malinowski: Off the Verandah* (From the Stranger abroad series), 1990 (GN20.S77 1990)
Please Note:
All students are expected to abide to the Wellesley College Honor Code. At the same time, you are encouraged to work in groups and learn from each other. Students with disabilities who may need accommodations are encouraged to work with the Learning and Teaching Center. They should also feel free to talk to me.

Course Outline

Thursday, January 28
Introducing Anthropology: What is the ethnographic looking-glass?
Read:
Monaghan and Just, Introduction and chapter 1
Film: First Contact

Monday, February 1
How is the ‘other’ represented in popular media?
Read:
Steinmetz, George “Irian Jaya’s people of the trees,” National Geographic, February 1996:34-43 (e-reserve)

Thursday, February 4
Anthropology candidate: Reighan Gillam
Media representations of indigeneity
Read:

Monday, February 8
Who were the Stone Agers? What is evolution? Did societies evolve, like biological species, from simpler to more complex forms?
Read:
Darwin, Charles The descent of man, 1871 (e-reserve)
Morgan, Lewis Henry, “Ethnical periods”, 1877 (e-reserve)
Berman, Judith, 1999 “Bad hair days in the Paleolithic: modern (re)constructions of the cave man.” American Anthropologist 101(2):288-304 (e-reserve)
Thursday, February 11
Anthropology candidate: Christina Schwenkel (University of California, Riverside)
What makes us human? The anthropology of the human body
Read:

Monday, February 15, President’s day, no class

Tuesday February 16
What does the concept of race mean? Is there such biological fact as race?
Read:
Elizabeth Chin "Ethnically Correct Dolls: Toying with the Race Industry" American Anthropologist 101(2) : 105-321) (e-reserve)
American Anthropological Association (AAA) statement on ‘race’
http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm
In class screening of the film: Race: The power of an illusion, Part I

Thursday, February 18
Anthropology candidate: Shaylih Muehlmann (University of California, Berkeley)
How do anthropologists study culture and society?
Read:
Richard Lee' "Eating Christmas in the Kalahari" (e-reserve)
Evans Pritchard "The notion of witchcraft explains unfortunate events" chapter 2 (e-reserve)
Malinowski, Bronislaw “Introduction” The Argonauts of The Western Pacific (e-reserve)

Saturday, February 20
Field trip to the Peabody Museum, Harvard University
Monday, February 22
Due today: Response paper #1: What were your reactions to the film “Race?”
What makes human? Language/culture/personality?
Read:
Whorf  "Relation of Habitual Though and Behavior to Language (e-reserve)
(e-reserve)

Thursday, February 25
Anthropology Candidate: Jerome Whitington (Dartmouth College)
What makes us human? Technology
Read:
Clifford Geertz, The Wet and the Dry, Traditional Irrigation in Bali and Morocco.
In Michael Cove and Carol Carpenter, Environmental Anthropology, Blackwell
2008 pp 190-200 (e-reserve)
EP Thompson, Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism, Past and present
38, 1967, pp 56-97 (e-reserve)

Monday, March 1
What makes us human? Society? Culture? What is culture?
Read:
Monaghan and Just, chapters 2 and 3
Boas, Franz “The methods of ethnology”, 1920 (e-reserve)
Benedict, Ruth “Psychological types in the cultures of the Southwest” (1930) (e-reserve)

Thursday, March 4
mid-term examination

Monday, March 8
Due today: Response #2: Your visit to the Peabody Museum
What is ethnography?
Read:
Weiner, Annette, Introduction and chapter 1, pp.1-27
Murphy and Murphy, Chapter 3
Thursday, March 11
What is ecology and subsistence?

Read:
Murphy and Murphy, Chapters 1-2
Lee, Richard, “The Hunters: Scarce resources in the Kalahari” (e-reserve)

Monday, March 15
Kinship and descent

Read:
Monaghan and Just, chapter 4
Murphy and Murphy, chapter 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9
In class viewing of the film Trobriand Cricket: An ingenious response to colonialism (1975)

Thursday, March 18
Marriage, family and gender

Read:
Weiner, Annette Chapters 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8

Monday March 22, no class, spring break
Thursday, March 25, no class, spring break

Monday, March 29
Symbolism, religion and magic

Read:
Murphy and Murphy, chapter 5
Weiner, Annette, Chapter 4

Thursday, April 1
Due today: Response Paper #3: Does the film Trobriand Cricket enhance or diminish our understanding of Trobriand society? How does it complement Weiner’s book?
Colonizing plants and humans: Economic development and global capitalism

Read:
Murphy and Murphy, Chapter 8
Mintz, Sydney, Sweetness and Power, Introduction and Chapter 1
Monday, April 5
Continue on Colonialism
Read:
Mintz, Sydney *Sweetness and power*, Chapters 2 and 3

Thursday, April 8
Continue on Colonialism
Read:
Mintz, Sydney *Sweetness and power*, Chapter 4
Film: Papapapa

Monday, April 12
Ordering the world nationally: nationalism in a post-colonial world
Read:
Geertz, Clifford “After the Revolution (e-reserve)
Geertz, Clifford “The integrative revolution” (e-reserve)

Thursday, April 15
Nations and modern nationalisms
Read:
Monaghan and Just, chapter 5

Monday, April 19, no class, Patriot’s day and Boston Marathon

Thursday, April 22
Culture Change and Anthropology: Indigenous movements and human rights
Read:
Monaghan and Just, chapter 6
Turner, Terence “Kapayo Resistance” (e-reserve)
Film: In class-viewing of Black Harvest (1992)
Monday, April 26
Public anthropology

*Read:*
Monaghan and Just, Chapter 7

Thursday, April 29
Applying anthropology

*Read:*
Monaghan and Just, chapter 8
Bailey, Eric “Medical anthropologist as Health Department Consultant” *Practicing Anthropology*, 16(1):13-15, 1994 (e-reserve)

Monday, May 3
Thursday, May 6
Student presentations on their ethnography

Ethnography papers due by 4:30, Monday May 17

Have a wonderful summer!!!!!