**PERSONHOOD (070:510)**

**Fall 2015**

Instructor: Ulla D. Berg Thursdays 12:35-3:35PM

Email: uberg@rci.rutgers.edu Class meetings: RAB 302

Office Hours: Thurs 4-5pm or by appointment Office: RAB 315

**I. Course description**

This course seeks to do a historical and comparative exploration of the concept of personhood in anthropological approaches to culture. It is designed to offer a broad and historically grounded understanding of key anthropological debates about personhood, its social implications, and the relationship between the embodied self and collective identities. To illustrate some of the ways in which anthropologists have sought to understand concepts such as person, individual, embodiment, and self,we will read from a variety of studies on how people in cross-cultural and different institutional contexts conceive of person and self.Emphasis will be placed on cases where personhood becomes uncertain, questionable, or under siege within unevenly distributed fields of power. Topics include the role of the nation state in defining persons; rites of passage in the life cycle of persons; personhood at the beginning and end of life; the performance of personhood and self through language; normativity and “degrees” of personhood in relation to gender, race, class, illness, and legal status; incarceration and confinement and their relation to personhood; and avatars in digital/virtual space.

**II. Course objectives**

1. To offer students a broad and historically grounded understanding of key anthropological debates about personhood, the social implications, and the relationship between the embodied self and collective identities within unevenly distributed fields of power.
2. To help students identify the methodological and theoretical “baggage” that comes with using concepts such as person, individual, self, and subject and assess the methodological and analytical advantages and/or disadvantages of one term over the other for particular research projects in specific fieldwork sites.

**III. Requirements and grading**

Weekly responses – 30%

Facilitate one class discussion – 10%

Short essay – 20%

Final paper –40%

**IV. Selected Course Readings \***

Please consult Rutgers Barnes & Noble for an updated reading list for the course. Additional readings, primary sources, websites, and articles are available on Sakai.

# Emily Martin, 2007. *Bipolar Expeditions. Mania and Depression in American Culture.* Princeton University

# Press. ISBN 0691141061

# Lorna Rhodes, 2004. *Total Confinement: Madness and Reason in the Maximum Security Prison*. California University Press. ISBN 0520240766

Marisol de la Cadena, 2015. *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds.* Duke Univ. Press.

ISBN: 978-0-8223-5963-0

Ana Ramos-Zayas, 2012. *Street Therapists. Race, Affect, and Neoliberal Personhood in Latino Newark*.

Chicago University Press. ISBN: 9780226703626.