

Culture and Social Life

Anthropology 101

Fall 2019

Lectures: Mondays and Thursdays 12:35-1:55 in Ruth Adams Building, Room 001 (Douglass)

Recitations: various times on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays

Instructed by:

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office hours Mon. 3:30-5:00pm in Biosciences Building, room 201 (Douglass) or by appointment

With teaching assistants:

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The teaching assistants will announce office hours to their recitations. If your class schedule prevents you from seeing a TA during his or her office hours, please make an appointment.

Course Description

Commonly, people either ignore or exaggerate the importance of culture. “Introduction to Cultural Anthropology” will explain the concept of culture – as a set of meanings, values, and practices - and put it into useful perspective. We ignore culture when we presume that people act simply to maximize profit, convenience, or enjoyment. People drive cars, for instance, to travel quickly in relative comfort. Yet, especially middle-class American white men live out – as they drive - an autonomy, freedom, and power deeply rooted in the nation’s westward expansion. Not merely useful, the SUV or truck also carries a symbolic charge sometimes approaching the sacred. An understanding of culture, then allows us to appreciate the complexity of social life and the ways in which it depends on race, class, gender, and nationality. This discussion of culture’s explanatory power constitutes the central part of the course. We will also explore culture in new, unexpected places: on the internet and at storage sites for nuclear waste.

Bookending the course, two sections consider the role of the anthropologist him- or herself. What methods, ethics, and preconceived cast of mind, does the anthropologist bring to the people studied, near and far? More important for most students, how can a non-anthropologist apply the same cultural sensibilities to the daily life of a plural-but-unequal society such as our own? Politicians and pundits mostly treat culture as a fixed, genetic category – the way one used to think of race. If it succeeds, this course will enable you to contribute nuance to debates on social diversity around you and at a distance. Fluency in cultural anthropology – I say at the risk of immodesty - will make you a fuller human and a better citizen or resident of the United States.

Course objectives

The attentive, serious student will, by the end of the course, will gain an understanding of;

1. The concept of culture;
2. Cultural relativism;
3. Participant observation and other methods of anthropological fieldwork;
4. Symbolism, ritual, and other fields of meaning;
5. Ethics of research in cultural anthropology.
6. Cultural analysis, or ways of detecting meaning in everyday practices.

CORE CURRICULUM LEARNING GOALS MET BY THIS COURSE (FOR THE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES)

II: Areas of Inquiry

B: Social Science and History

h) Understand the bases & development of human and societal endeavors across time and place.

i) Explain and be able to assess the relationship among assumptions, method, evidence, arguments, and theory in social and historical analysis.

B2: Social Analysis

m) Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization

An exercise held during the final exam period will assess students' achievement of these goals.

Graded work

By the recitations in Week 6, each student will submit one “reaction paragraph” of structured commentary or analysis on an individual reading selection. That assignment – which emphasizes the clarity of your writing – will contribute 10% to the course grade. There will be two take-home essay exams, each worth 25% of the grade. Their dates are listed in the week-by-week section of the syllabus below. Students will take five unannounced “pop” quizzes (based on that week’s reading) in lectures. The lowest grade will drop out, and each of the remaining four quizzes will contribute 5% to the course grade. The remaining 20% will rest of students’ attendance of and vocal participation in recitations. To summarize, grades are calculated as follows:

1. Reaction paragraph	10%
2. Midterm take-home exam	25%
3. Final take-home exam	25%
4. Best four pop quizzes	20%
5. Participation in recitations	20%
TOTAL	100%

Students holding accommodation letters from the Office of Disability Services should present them at the earliest moment possible.

Reading

For greater ease of comprehension, please read each week's selections in the order they appear on the syllabus. Almost all the reading materials are available in electronic form on the Sakai site for the course (see below). Where I have assigned more than one third of a book, however, copyright laws prohibit loading it onto this system. Therefore, the book listed immediately below is only available on reserve as a hard copy at the Douglass Library. If you wish, you may also purchase the book at Barnes and Noble or used a <http://www.abebooks.com>.

Shostak, Marjorie. 2001. *Return to Nisa*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Recitations

Teaching assistants run the recitations. They provide an important space in which to discuss the reading and lectures, raise questions, and clarify uncertainty. They also allow you to demonstrate your engagement with the course materials – a form of participation which contributes substantially to your grade in the course. At a minimal level, students should attend all the recitations and listen politely to the TA and their peers.

Sakai Site

“Sakai” refers to the on-line platform for all sorts of Rutgers-related business. Its web address is: <https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal>. Within Sakai, each student should already belong to a group helpfully entitled “01:070:101:01 Fa19.” You will find course readings under the “Resources” section. You will submit written work through the “Assignments” section. Sakai automatically compares all such texts with each other and with the entirety of the web.

Course policies

Absences: Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website (<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. This procedure does not *excuse* the absence. Only absences caused medical appointments or personal bereavement will be excused. Students must present proper documentation regarding such absences within two weeks of the absence or by 10 May, whichever comes first. In lecture, if a student misses one pop quiz – for any reason – the F grade on that quiz will be dropped. If a student misses a second pop quiz, he or she must present the same sort of note in order for the F to be dropped (and so on for subsequent quizzes). Finally, late take-home exams will be down-graded 10% per day or fraction thereof unless the student presents a relevant explanatory note.

Classroom etiquette: Class begins punctually. Late arrival indicates disrespect to the instructor and to the other students. In order to minimize disruptions, late students should settle themselves as quietly as possible in the back of the classroom. Texting, emailing, and web surfing is similarly disrespectful and undermining. Those engaging in these activities will be asked to leave the lecture hall for the rest of the period. Students may use laptop computers or notepads

for taking notes, but they must sit in the last three rows of the theater. Otherwise, the screen distracts students sitting behind them. The same policies apply in recitations. Finally, regarding cell phone rings, they are to be avoided at all costs.

Academic integrity: Cheating lowers the value of a Rutgers degree and the learning experience for all students. No form of cheating will be tolerated. When take-home exams are submitted, the Sakai site automatically screens each for evidence of plagiarism. One commits plagiarism when one represents the text or ideas of others as one's own creation. Please visit the website of the Rutgers Office of Academic Integrity (<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>) for a fuller explanation of plagiarism and of the penalties for it. Proved plagiarists will receive a disciplinary F in the course and possibly faced expulsion from the University.

INTRODUCTION

Week 1 (5 September): What is anthropology?

Shostak, Marjorie. 2001. *Return to Nisa*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Pp. 19-95.

Week 2 (9 September-): Encounters with the Other

Shostak, Marjorie. 2001. *Return to Nisa*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Pp. 161-178, 195-237.

Monaghan, John and Peter Just. 2000. *Social and Cultural Anthropology: a Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. pp. 13-28, 30-33.

Week 3 (16 September-): The concept of culture

Benedict, Ruth. 1934. *Patterns of Culture*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Chapter 6 (pp. 173-222).

Monaghan, John and Peter Just. 2000. *Social and Cultural Anthropology: a Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. pp. 34-52.

CULTURAL EXPLANATIONS FOR ...

Week 4 (23 September-): Sex

Mead, Margaret. 1928. *Coming of Age in Samoa: a Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization*. New York: Morrow. Chapter 10.

Katz, Jonathan. 1995. *The Invention of Heterosexuality*. New York: Dutton. Pp. 12-18.

Gutmann, Matthew. 1996. *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 5 (35 pages).

Week 5 (30 September-): Motherhood

- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1992. *Death without Weeping: the Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 8 (pp. 340-399).
- Ortner, Sherry. 1974. "Is male is to female as culture is to nature?" In Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds. *Women, Culture, and Society*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Pp. 67-87.

Week 6: (7 October-): Debt, including student debt

- Graeber, David. 2011. *Debt: the First 5000 Years*. Brooklyn, NY: Melville House. Chapters 1,2,4, and pp. 381-87, 390-91 (67 pages total).

This is the last week to submit reaction paragraphs.

Week 7 (14 October-): Consumption

- Lutz, Catherine and Anne Lutz Fernandez. 2010. *Carjacked: the Culture of the Automobile and its Effect on our Lives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 2. Pp. 13-38.
- Veblen, Thorsten. 1931 [1899]. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York: Viking. Pp. 85-101.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1972. *Stone Age Economics*. New York: Aldine. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-40).

Week 8 (21 October-): Globalization

- Carse, Ashley. 2014. *Beyond the Big Ditch: Politics, Ecology, and Infrastructure at the Panama Canal*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Chapters 1,2,7,12,13 (62 pages).

The take-home exam will cover Weeks 1-7. It will be posted to the course's website on Monday 21 October at 4pm. Students must upload their completed essays to the Sakai site by Wednesday 23 October at 4pm. (Additionally, teaching assistants may require students to submit identical hard copies at the lecture on Thursday 24 October.)

Week 9 (28 October-): Tolerance

- Bowen, John R. 2007. *Why the French don't Like Headscarves: Islam the State and Public Space*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 2 and 4 (pp. 9-33 and 65-97).
- Koonz, Claudia. 2009. "Hijāb/Headscarf: a political journey." In Carol Gluck and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, eds. *In Motion: towards a Global Lexicon*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. pp. 174-95.

Week 10 (4 November-): Nature

- Wilson, Alexander. 1991. *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez*. Toronto: Between the Lines. Pp. 11-52.
- Hughes, D.M. 2017. *Energy without Conscience: Oil, Climate Change, and Complicity*. Chapter 4 (pp. 95-119).

Week 11 (11 November-): Geological action

McKibben, Bill. 1999 [1989]. *The End of Nature*. New York: Anchor. Pp. xv-xxv, 3-14, and 47-49.

Weisman, Alan. 2007. *The World without Us*. New York: St. Martin's Press. Chapter 9.

ANTHROPOLOGY AS A WAY OF LIFE

Week 12 (18 November-): Speaking truth to power

Barker, Holly M. 2007. "From analysis to action: efforts to address the nuclear legacy in the Marshall Islands." In Barbara Rose Johnston, Barbara Rose. *Half-Lives and Half-Truths: Confronting the Radioactive Legacies of the Cold War*. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press. Pp. 213-47.

Toobin, Jeffrey. 2011. "The mitigator: a new way of looking at the death penalty." *The New Yorker*, May 9, pp. 32-39.

Week 13 (25 November-): Culture in public discourse

Huntington, Samuel P. 1996. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster. Chapter 2 (pp. 40-55).

Gusterson, Hugh. 2005. "The seven deadly sins of Samuel Huntington." In Catherine Besteman and Hugh Gusterson, eds. *Why America's Pundits are Wrong*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Pp. 24-42.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 2006. *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. New York: Norton. Chapters 7, 8 (pp. 101-35).

Thursday classes will meet on Tuesday this week.

Week 14 (2 December-): A calling in anthropology

Scott, Janey. 2011. *A Singular Woman: the Untold Story of Barack Obama's Mother*. New York: Riverhead. Pp. 174-249.

Hefner, Robert W. 2009. "Ann Dunham, Indonesia, and Anthropology – a Generation on." Afterward to Dunham, S. Ann. *Surviving against the Odds: Village Industry in Indonesia*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Pp. 333-45.

Week 15 (9 December): Life examined

No reading

The take-home exam will be posted to the course's website on Tuesday 10 December at 8am. Students must upload their completed essays to the Sakai site by Thursday 12 December at

8am. (Additionally, teaching assistants may require students to submit identical hard copies at the time of the assessment exercise described below.)

The official exam period falls on Tuesday 17 December at 8-11am in Ruth Adams Building 001. We will use only the last hour: 10-11am. Students will take a short exam to assess their attainment of the learning goals of the course. The results of this assessment will not count toward the final grade. Attendance at this exam, however, contributes to the participation grade.