

ANTHC 101: Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Tues & Fri 9:10 – 10am

Room 510HN

Instructor

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 10:15am-11:15am in Room 713HN, or by request

Teaching Assistants

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Description

Cultural anthropology emerged from attempts to understand what makes human beings different from one another (and from non-humans), as well as what things we all have in common. This course is an introduction to the field – from its early attempts to make a science out of the study of culture, through its critiques and crises, to the present day. We will not approach the discipline in isolation, but rather will try to understand anthropology's place within a set of broader questions: What can we know about what it means to be human? How can we come to know it? Who gets to be in control of this knowledge, and with what consequences? In approaching these questions, this course will take up anthropology as, simultaneously, a methodological toolbox, a body of theory and critique, and itself an important part of the history of domination and resistance.

Objectives

- To provide an account of cultural anthropology's history, key concepts, and primary methodologies;
- To equip students to engage critically and thoughtfully with subjects of social and cultural importance – including race, gender, sexuality, the state, and the environment;
- To foster an awareness of the relationship between knowledge, representation and power through readings and discussion of ethical issues involved in the ethnographic method and anthropological study;
- To study and develop practices of communicating these ideas through writing and discussion.

Discussion Sections

All students must be registered for a weekly discussion section led by a TA. These mandatory discussions are an opportunity to dig into the week's readings and lecture material in an engaged way. Your TAs are only guides: come ready with questions for discussion, critiques of the material, and passages that you found interesting or confusing. (Discussion sections will address only readings assigned up to the date that section meets.)

Materials

All readings and other course materials will be posted on Blackboard (bbhosted.cuny.edu). Let your TA know right away if you're having trouble accessing them.

Policies

- Do the readings and make sure you have a way of accessing them during class, and especially during your discussion sections;
- Lectures and discussion are only 50 minutes long, so make this time count: be on time and avoid distracting other students by staying off your phone and computer, except to access notes and readings;
- Attend class – assignments in this class draw on readings and lecture material equally, and you won't do well if you're only doing the readings and looking at the slideshows;
- Regularly check Blackboard and the email attached to your CUNYFirst account for announcements.
- Turning in an assignment late without discussing an extension with the instructor or your TA will cost you half a letter grade for every day past the deadline. An A paper turned in on the due date but after the deadline time will receive an A-, the next day a B+, and so on. The earlier you contact us, the better.

Evaluation

5% Syllabus Test – due by 9/7 on Blackboard

This is a simple, five minute test to make sure we're all on the same page about the course's structure and policies. It will be available on Blackboard the first week of class – take it at your convenience before 11:59pm on 9/7 when it disappears.

25% Reading Responses – due throughout the semester on Blackboard

Over the course of the semester, you'll write EIGHT short responses to the readings, each 300-500 words long, to be turned in on Blackboard under your discussion section's "Discussion Board" by 7pm the night before your section meets. Rather than just summaries, these should be critical engagements with the text(s) assigned for that discussion section. Possible ways to approach these responses:

- Identify an interesting, confusing, or seemingly contradictory passage and describe what makes it stand out for you;
- Connect the text to previous readings or lectures;
- Relate the reading to current events or your own observations that demonstrate (or complicate) the author's points;
- Pose questions for further discussion.

All responses should make direct references to specific parts of the text(s), including page numbers so others can find them. The more work you put into your responses, the more useful they'll be as resources for you and your colleagues throughout the semester. Make sure to look ahead and plan your responses so you can complete all eight before the end of the semester.

15% Ethnographic Observation – due 9/28 at the beginning of lecture

For this short assignment, you'll pick a public place that you're unfamiliar with and observe it, taking notes but not speaking to anyone, for half an hour. Based on the methods discussed in lecture and readings, write a 1.5-2 page ethnographic description of this space (use the formatting requirements above). What did you see? How did people interact with each other and the space? Did you learn anything about them? What questions were you left with? And, importantly, how did you feel being there as an observer? Make specific reference to at least one text we've read.

25% Museum Assignment – draft for peer review due in your discussion section the week of 10/15, final assignment due 10/23 at the beginning of lecture

For this assignment, you'll visit the human culture halls of the American Museum of Natural History on your own at some point in mid-October. Detailed instructions will follow, but plan to spend around an hour there taking notes, then writing a 3-4 page paper on the representational strategies of these exhibits, citing at least 2 course readings. Here you'll be paying attention to how people and their cultures are displayed, what kind of language is used to describe them, and the effects of these forms of exhibition.

30% Final Take-Home Exam – due 12/18 on Blackboard

For the final exam, you'll write a few short essay responses, focused primarily on the second half of the semester but drawing on concepts from across the course. Essay prompts and instructions will be distributed after the last lecture on 12/11 and will be due online the following week.

Note on formatting:

- Written assignments must have 1-inch margins on all sides and must be in 12 point Times New Roman, double-spaced, with no extra spaces between paragraphs;
- Avoid wasting space at the beginning – just your name, your TA's name, and a title for the assignment;
- When citing a quote or paraphrased idea, put this information in parentheses immediately after: (Author Year: Page). E.g. "This is your syllabus" (Moore 2018: 3);
- Include a basic works cited list at the end – copying and pasting references from this syllabus is fine. This does not count towards the assignment's page count.

Week 1

1. Tues 8/28

Introduction

Course overview and syllabus review

2. Fri 8/31

The Rise of Anthropology

How has human difference been approached historically? What traditions gave rise to cultural anthropology?

Herodotus, excerpts from *The Histories* (440 BC)

Michel de Montaigne, “Of Cannibals” (1580)

Week 2

3. Tues 9/4

Primitive and Civilized

What classifications have guided – or obscured – thinking about humans? Why do these categories matter?

Lewis Henry Morgan, “Ethnical Periods,” from *Ancient Society* (1877)

4. Fri 9/7

SYLLABUS TEST due on Blackboard by 11:59pm

Method

If other humans can be subjects for observation, how should that research be done? What kinds of information have anthropologists thought they could learn, and how?

Branisław Malinowski, “Subject, Scope, and Method” and excerpts from “The Essentials of the Kula,” in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) – also look through the photos at the end
Branisław Malinowski, excerpts from *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (1967) (Note: the author uses racist and sexist language)

Week 3

Tues 9/11 NO CLASS

5. Fri 9/14

Strange/Familiar

How do we understand cultural differences relative to one another? What’s at stake when we try to make difference intelligible?

Margaret Mead, “Preface 1973 Edition,” “Introduction,” and “A Day in Samoa,” in *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928/1973)

Renato Rosaldo, “Introduction: Grief and a Headhunter's Rage,” in *Culture and Truth* (1989)

Horace Miner, “Body Ritual among the Nacirema” (1956)

Week 4

Tues 9/18 NO CLASS

6. Fri 9/21

Social Science

What does it mean to think scientifically about society? What traditions does this approach draw on? How have politics, economy, history, and culture been synthesized together?

Émile Durkheim, excerpts from *The Rules of the Sociological Method* (1895)

AR Radcliffe-Brown, excerpts from *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (1952)

Max Gluckman, excerpts from “Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand” (1940)

Week 5

7. Tues 9/24

Culture

How has the concept of culture changed over time? How do culture and cultural difference get deployed today?

Kenneth Guest, "Culture," in *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* (2016)

8. Fri 9/28

ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION due at beginning of class

Epistemology

How does anthropology fit within systems of knowledge production?

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, excerpts from "Anthropology and the Savage Slot," in *Global Transformations* (2003)

Week 6

9. Tues 10/2

Exhibition

What happens to culture on display?

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Ethnography," in *Exhibiting Cultures* (1991)

10. Fri 10/5

Settler Colonialism

Who is Indigenous? What is the relationship between knowledge and colonization?

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, "This Land," "Follow the Corn," and "Culture of Conquest," in *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (2015)

Week 7

11. Tues 10/9

Relationships, Refusal, and Complicity

What should the role of anthropologists be in relation to the people they write about?

Vine Deloria Jr., "Anthropologists and Other Friends," in *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969)

Indigenous Action Media, "Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex" (2014)

12. Fri 10/12

Relationships, Refusal, and Complicity (cont'd.)

What is the goal of the pursuit of knowledge? Should knowledge ever be withheld?

Audra Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice' and Colonial Citizenship" (2007)

Week 8

13. Tues 10/16

MUSEUM ASSIGNMENT DRAFTS due in discussion section this week for peer review

Witness

What does it mean to bear witness to, share in, and represent the suffering of others?

Seth Holmes, excerpt from *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies* (2013)
 Jason De León, excerpt from *The Land of Open Graves* (2015)
 Victoria Sanford, excerpt from *Buried Secrets* (2003)

14. Fri 10/19

(Moving) Images

What can we learn differently from images? How do words and images function together?

Lisa Stevenson and Eduardo Kohn, “*Leviathan: An Ethnographic Dream*” (2015)

Watch at home up to 14:10: Robert Flaherty, “Nanook of the North” (1922), available at
<http://bit.do/nanook101>

To watch in class, excerpts from:

Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, “Bathing Babies in Three Cultures” (1951)

Trinh T. Minh-Ha, “Reassemblage” (1983)

Lucien Castaing-Taylor, “Leviathan” (2012)

Week 9

15. Tues 10/23

MUSEUM ASSIGNMENT due at the beginning of class

Politics and the State

How do anthropologists study nations and states? How do people take action within and outside of the state?

No readings, but refer to uploaded Kenneth Guest chapter for reference

16. Fri 10/26

Race in the US & Beyond

What biological and cultural ideas inform our understanding of race? What does race “do”?

Audrey Smedley, “The History of the Idea of Race...and Why it Matters” (2007)

Karen Brodtkin Sacks, “How Did Jews Become White Folks?” (1998)

Week 10

17. Tues 10/30

Decolonization

Is colonialism over? What work is there for anthropology?

Aimé Césaire, “Discourse on Colonialism” (1950)

18. Fri 11/2

Orientalism

What is the relationship between representation and domination?

Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” (2002)

Video clip in class: “Edward Said On Orientalism” (1998)

Week 11

19. Tues 11/6

Power

Who has power, and how should we study it?

Michel Foucault, excerpts from *Discipline and Punish* (1975)

20. Fri 11/16**The Body**

How do biology, culture, history, and power come together in and on our bodies?

Adriana Petryna, “Life Politics after Chernobyl,” in *Life Exposed* (2013)

Week 12**21. Tues 11/20****Medical Anthropology**

Nancy Scheper-Huges, “Min(d)ing the Body: On the Trail of Organ Stealing Rumors,” in *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines* (2002)

Fri 11/23 NO CLASSWeek 13**22. Tues 11/27****Gender**

What is the relationship between sex, gender, and sexuality?

Emily Martin, “The Egg and the Sperm” (1991)

23. Fri 11/30**Gender (cont’d)**

How do anthropologists study gender and power?

Judith Butler (interview), “Judith Butler on gender and the trans experience” (2015)

Film in class: Kate Davis, “Southern Comfort” (2001)

Week 14**24. Tues 12/4****Resistance**

How can people change their situations?

Keisha-Khan Perry, “‘If We Didn't Have Water’: Black Women's Struggle for Urban Land Rights in Brazil” (2009)

25. Fri 12/7**The Environment and Nature**

Where did the idea of nature come from, and is it distinct from culture?

William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” (1996)

Week 15**26. Tues 12/11 – Review Day**

You are welcome to contact me (by email or in person during office hours/by appointment) if you have concerns about, or need help navigating resources related to, academic performance, writing, accessibility, mental health, safety, and other issues.

Hunter College Academic Integrity Statement

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

Hunter College ADA Statement

In compliance with the ADA and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational access and accommodations for all its registered students. Hunter College's students with disabilities and medical conditions are encouraged to register with the Office of AccessABILITY for assistance and accommodation. For information and appointment contact the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1214 or call (212) 772-4857 /or VRS (646) 755-3129.

Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct

In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

- a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).
- b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link:

<http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf>