

Anthropology of the Himalayas
ANS 361.27/ANT 324L/AAS330 – Unique 31350/31665/32190
University of Texas at Austin – Fall 2018
RPL 0.122
Tuesday/Thursday 2 - 3:30 PM

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Office Hours: Tuesday 3:30-4:30, Thursday 12:30 - 1:30 -- Other times by appointment

Course Description

This course looks at the history and culture of the Himalayan region, including Northeast India, sections of Pakistan and Afghanistan, and Tibet, but especially Nepal. Some understanding of Asian history, politics and religion will be helpful (but not necessary) as our attempt will not be a comprehensive survey of the region. The Himalayas have been the site of a great deal of anthropological attention and as such we will be simultaneously be exploring several key theoretical, historical and methodological issues within the discipline of anthropology as we learn about places and people in the region. Particular attention will be paid to the area as a site for negotiating identity (caste and indigeneity), development politics, the environment, tourism, diasporas as well as the current political tensions in the region. At the conclusion of the class, students should have a stronger idea of the important role this area has played in the political, religious and social imagination of the world and an appreciation of concepts such as ritual theory, social movements, modernity and gender studies.

Texts and Readings

Three books have been ordered as **required reading** for this class:

Craig, Sienna. 2012. *Healing Elements: Efficacy and the Social Ecologies of Tibetan Medicine*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Liechty, Mark. 2003. *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-Class Culture in a New Consumer Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Beskey, Sarah, 2013. *The Darjeeling Distinction: Labor and Justices on Fair-Trade Tea Plantations in India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

These books are available at the UT Co-op bookstore, but also via on-line booksellers. (There should be no edition problems.) Note all these books are also available at the library for quick reference.

Our other readings are from assorted journals, books and edited collections. I have provided full bibliographic information on them in the syllabus (just to get us in the habit of providing citations). These will be found in “FILES” on our class Canvas page. Please check Canvas regularly – syllabus updates and additional information will often be posted there. (NB - I am new to Canvas, so let me know if something is not working out. “It wasn’t posted” isn’t an excuse for not doing the reading - send me a note that it isn’t posted.) You should bring the relevant text to class each day as we will be discussing the texts in class and that will be facilitated by you having something to remember the ideas. We will also be watching several

films in class – I consider these texts as well. I recommend you take notes on them and you should feel free to discuss them in your papers – visual material is intellectual material!

Readings listed for a given class day should be completed BEFORE coming to class to enable your active participation in discussion. If you are not able to do the readings, come to class anyway – but I anticipate this will only happen once or twice during the semester. (If student preparation becomes a problem, I reserve the right to introduce in-class quizzes as an enforcement mechanism.)

Assignments

There are six components to how your performance in this class will be evaluated. NOTE: On the syllabus all assignments are listed in ***Bold Italics***. The listed assignments must be turned in at the beginning of the noted class, on paper.

(#1 & 2) Class participation in this course is highly valued. (Perhaps needless to say, but attendance is an element of this – participating in class is difficult if you are not in class. Attendance is thus also a significant part of your participation grade.) Participation is more than ‘talking a lot’ – instead it is being an enthusiastic, prepared and considerate member of a learning community. To this end, coming to class prepared with notes and questions is often useful. Given that not everyone feels comfortable speaking in class, there are other ways you can participate. If you wish to contribute, but feel more comfortable writing, please feel free to send me an email with your thoughts on recent reading or to post a note on Canvas in our Discussion Board. I also encourage you to discuss in class events happening in the Himalayan region or issues raised by the course material that relates to other classes, but also remember...**this is a situation where more is not better – quality over quantity.**

In this class we will be talking about divisive, controversial and important issues – sex, religion, race, etc. – I expect students to show respect to themselves and other members of the learning community in these discussions. Please be considerate of one another. All opinions are welcome in this course if presented with civility and scholarly rigor.

As a part of our discussions, we may have quizzes or in-class writing exercises if this becomes useful or necessary.

(#3) There are classes throughout the term that will be lead by student presentation teams. These take place during the reading of the major texts of the class and in those days one or more students will be responsible for introducing the reading for the day and beginning class discussion. The “formal” oral presentation **should not take more than 15-20 minutes**. You should not summarize the material, but perhaps provide a few signposts to refresh participants’ memories. Your main contribution should be to provide some context for the reading (although faculty lectures will be doing this as well, and thus coordination of the presentation between faculty and student is necessary), relate the material to other ideas in the class, highlight key concepts and raise critical questions of the text that can lead to discussion. The student leader(s) should also be prepared to guide discussion throughout the class. It sounds like a lot – but this sort of preparation should be what most students are doing for most class periods. The main expectation is that the student be the most prepared one for that day.

(#4) There are four short papers throughout the class - you can choose three to complete. The length for these should be between 750-1000 words (2-4 pages) and hopefully the later papers will be longer than the earlier ones. These papers may require some outside research, using both popular and scholarly sources, although the main material will be drawn from the class. (Any material, including wikipedia, newspapers or commercial websites that you consult **MUST** be cited!) Your short papers should discuss one narrow area, topic, theory, period, etc. from the

reading for the section and explore it in more detail. These should be formally written papers with an argument but can include your opinion and reflections as well as any additional scholarly research you have done. I can provide topics - or if you have a particular area of interest you may select your own topic WITH PRIOR APPROVAL.

(#5) There will be an exam – but it will be short and minor. This is a class about concepts and ideas – nonetheless, you should leave the class with a better idea about the history, geography and politics of the Himalayan region, as well as a new mastery of anthropological concepts such as liminality, practice/praxis, power, social movements, etc. I anticipate (and dearly hope) that the average grade for this final exam will be over 95% and that it is an easy way to gain points. This is merely an attempt to be sure the class conveys some grasp of the region as a whole and that students can find Kashmir on a map at the end of the class.

(#6) The Final Paper is, well, a final paper, but need not be a final statement or a proclamation of total knowledge. The final paper should be a revision and expansion of one of the short papers written during the class. Keep this requirement in mind as you write your short papers and do the readings. I encourage you to write about areas of interest, but they must also be relevant to the class and of some scholarly rigor. The best final papers are ones that in some way begin within the first two weeks of the class and are something students continue to reflect on after the class is over.

The numbers...

Participation/Attendance	15%
Student Presentations	10%
3 Short papers	40%
Exam	10%
Final Paper	25%

An insight into the mind of your professor – I dislike the grading aspect of teaching and am far more enthusiastic about talking about how you are doing in the course than arguing over letters and numbers. Having a conversation **before** an assignment is due about the learning process and how each individual can improve has proven more useful for students seeking to do well in the course than looking at “A”, “B” or “C” at the top of your paper.

My Policies

ABSENCES

I expect students to come to class regularly, on time and prepared. If you do not do this, not only will your grade be negatively affected, but it disrupts the learning process of your fellow students as well as showing a lack of respect for the course. This is admittedly one of my pet peeves. If you must miss a class, make arrangements with your fellow students to make up the material. There are no 'free absences' in the class outside of legitimate and documented needs. Attending class means showing up on time, prepared and ready to learn. If you are not prepared – which I don't anticipate will ever happen – come to class anyway. I do not require documentation of medical absences, but please keep me informed, preferably in advance. Many problems can be solved if you keep in contact with your professors.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

I expect students to conduct their research and writing honestly and to reference any sources consulted. Plagiarism is theft and a particular heinous crime to those whose life is writing and research. Any dishonest academic practice will be referred to the administration for investigation. I encourage collaboration among students, which is different from copying or paper trading. One can never be accused of academic dishonesty if you acknowledge where your ideas came from. Learning how to master a combination of direct citation, paraphrase and idea acknowledgement takes time and practice. In the meantime, CITE EVERYTHING. If in doubt about the ethics of a situation, contact me – **do not guess**.

COMMUNICATION

I enjoy meeting with students in office hours and exchanging email with students. YET, I do not check email every 10 minutes. I am very eager to answer student questions by email, discuss points of the reading or relevant outside materials, but please think before you write. Show respect in your communication with me and with one another. I rarely use my office phone, you are more likely to get a response from me by email.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Turn off your cell phone when you get to class.
- **I DO NOT ALLOW LAPTOPS IN CLASS.** It has just become too much of a problem. If you have a documented need to use a laptop, please provide it. Recent studies suggest that students remember things better if written down the old-fashioned way, with paper and pen.
- You may eat and drink in class, if it is subtle and not distracting to you or other students. A cup of coffee – great – a roast chicken dinner – wait until after class.

University Notices and Policies

Global Cultures Flag

This course carries the Global Cultures flag. Global Cultures courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.

Writing Flag

This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Use of E-Mail for Official Correspondence to Students

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, you are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements. You are responsible to keep the university informed about changes to your e-mail address. You should check your e-mail regularly and frequently to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical. You can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

Documented Disability Statement

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you require special accommodations, you will need to obtain a letter that documents your disability from Services for Studies with Disabilities. Present the letter to me at the beginning of the semester so we can discuss the accommodations you need. No later than five business days before an exam, you should remind me of any testing accommodations you will need. For more information, contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone) or www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd.

Religious Holidays

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office

SYLLABUS POLICY SUMMARY – If in doubt - ask! I am much happier discussing potential problems and concerns than dealing with events in the past or problems that have been allowed to grow over time.

SCHEDULE

(This reading list is subject to change. I promise to give advanced notice, but you must check Canvas and your UT email regularly.)

August 30 Introduction to the class and policies

Ridiculously superficial introduction to geography and religion in the region.

September 4 History in the Moment

Forget Kathmandu - "Reading Nepal" (1-6) and "The History Exhibit" (51-79).

SKIM - Selection from *A History of Nepal* by John Whelpton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. (1-34). (BACKGROUND)

September 6

Politics for Good or Ill

Forget Kathmandu - "The Wind, The Haze" (83-120)

SKIM - *A History of Nepal*. (34-85) (BACKGROUND)

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Shangri-La and its Discontents

Selections from film and text *Himalaya* by Michael Palin. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004. (Mainly pictures)

Lopez, Donald. "Introduction," in *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. PP. 1-13.

Sherpas, Rituals and Trekking's Transformation

September 13 Selection from *Sherpas through their Rituals* by Sherry Ortner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. (10-60)

Student Presentation

18

High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism. by Sherry Ortner Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. (59-81, 99-123)

Student Presentation

20

Life and Death on Mt. Everest: Sherpas and Himalayan Mountaineering. by Sherry Ortner Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2001(Ch 1-3)

Student Presentation

25

Sherpa, P. Y. 2014. Climate change, perceptions and social heterogeneity in Pharak, Mount Everest region of Nepal. In *Human Organization*, 73(2):153-161.
"Sherpa Culture and the Tourist Torrent" by James Fisher. In *Tourists and Tourism: A Reader* ed. S. Gmelch. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2004. PP. 373-388.

Student Presentation

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"Dreams of a Final Sherpa" by Vincanne Adams. In *American Anthropologist* 99:1, 1997.

(*Trekking on Tradition* - Film)

DUE Paper on Section 1

Environment, Indigeneity and Labor in NE India

- October 2 *The Darjeeling Distinction* - Introduction (and start Ch. 1)
Student Presentation
- 4 *The Darjeeling Distinction* - Ch. 1&2 (“Darjeeling” and “Plantation”)
Student Presentation
- 9 *The Darjeeling Distinction* - Ch. 3&4 (“Property” and “Fairness”)
Student Presentation
- 11 *The Darjeeling Distinction* - Ch. 5 (“Sovereignty”) and Conclusion
Student Presentation
- 16 “Across the Interface of State Ethnography: Rethinking Ethnology and its Subjects in Multicultural India.” C. Townsend Middleton. *American Ethnologist* 38(2): 249-266.
DUE Paper on Section 2

Class, Modernity and the Real Kathmandu

- October 18 *Suitably Modern* Chapters 1-3
- 23 *Suitably Modern* Chapters 4-6
Student Presentation
- 25 *Suitably Modern* Chapters 7-9
Student Presentation
- 30 *Suitably Modern* Chapter 10
Student Presentation
- November 1 Selections from *HIMALAYA* 37:1 (Liechty, Rana, Nelson and Whitmarsh)
DUE Paper on Section 3

Medicine - East, West and Other

- November 6 *Healing Elements* - Intro. and Chapter 1
- 8 *Healing Elements* - Chapter 2 and 3
Student Presentation
- 13 *Healing Elements* Chapter 4 and 5
Student Presentation

- 15 *Healing Elements* Chapter 6 and Conclusion (skipping 7)
 Student Presentation
- 20 “On Sitting and Doing: Ethnography as Action in Global Health.” by
 Stacy Pigg 2013 *Social Science and Medicine* 99: 127 -134
 DUE Paper on Section 4

Exploring our Interests... (TBA)

November 27

- 29
 Student Presentation

December 4
 Student Presentation

December 6 Wrap up, news, exam prep

FINAL PAPER DUE December 14th at 4PM
(EXAM time TBA)