Concepts and Methods in Cultural Anthropology

Anthropology 202
Spring 05
Dr Valerie Singer
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Office Hours: Mondays 2:00-3:30, Tuesdays 10-11:30, Fridays 9:30-10:30

and by appointment (any changes to office hours will be posted on class conference)

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(Feel free to call me at home, however I ask that you don't call after 9 PM.)

Course Description

This course is designed to familiarize students with both the theory and practice of cultural anthropology. As a class, we will be engaging in two complimentary experiences: reading ethnographies and conducting ethnographic research. (Ethnographies, detailed accounts of specific cultures, are the bread and butter of cultural anthropology.) The course will raise questions about: the meaning of culture; the relationship of individual agency, cultural values, and structural constraints in people's lives; what it means to systematically observe, participate in, record, and discuss a 'culture'; contextual understandings of "self" and "other"; the application of cultural relativity; and the relationship between anthropological researcher and researchees. Along the way we will look at a variety of social institutions, such as marriage, family, religion, and economics among others.

Required Texts

- Writing Women's Worlds, Bedouin Stories by Lila Abu-Lughod
- Laughter Out of Place, Race, Class, Violence, and Sexuality in a Rio Shantytown by Donna Goldstein
- <u>Parallel Worlds, An Anthropologist and a Writer Encounter Africa</u> by Alma Gottlieb and Philip Graham
- In Search of Respect, Selling Crack in El Barrio by Philippe Bourgois
- Additional Course readings available on Electronic Researve

Grade Break Down:

Reading Quizzes: 10%
Weekly response papers: 10%
Attendance & Participation: 15%
Midterm: 15%
Final 20%
Ethnographic project: 30%

(Fieldnotes 15% and ethnographic paper 15%)

Total: 100%

Weekly Response Papers:

Each Thursday you will be required to turn in a short (two page) response paper. The paper should be a response to the course readings of that week. As a RESPONSE paper, it should not be a summary of the readings, but rather your thoughts and reflections that emerged from the material. You should include a discussion question in each response paper. The paper should be typed and must be turned in during class. LATE **RESPONSES ARE NOT ACCEPTED.** These papers will be graded check, check plus, check minus. I will count the 10 highest paper grades together as 10% of your final grade.

Reading Quizzes

Each Tuesday there will be a reading quiz. This very short (usually 3 questions) quiz will be designed to confirm that you are doing the assigned reading. Students who have read the material should be able to easily get all questions right, while students who have not read will be unable to answer the questions. The reading quiz will be given at the beginning of class each Tuesday. If you are absent or late to class, you will not be allowed to make up a reading quiz. I will drop your lowest grade, and average the rest for 10% of your final grade.

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance and Participation are both very central to this course. Much of the classroom time will be run in seminar format, with students sharing their thoughts and perspectives on the anthropological issues at hand. I believe you share with me the responsibility of creating a classroom atmosphere where ALL students feel comfortable participating. This means that your full participation requires not only speaking up in class, but actively and respectfully listening to others. For class discussion to go well, it is essential at all times that you are up to date on the work- both your reading and your ethnographic fieldwork (TPSL). I will be creating a course conference for us on learn link, and all students are expected to participate in continued discussion on the class conference, as well as checking the conference for any announcements or changes.

I will be taking attendance on a daily basis.

Ethnography project:

The primary assignment of this class will require you to engage in your own ethnographic research. Each student is required to complete at least 20 hours of volunteer time in a local community organization as part of a Theory-Practice-Service Learning project. Ideally this will be done in two-hour volunteer sessions over a 10 week period. Through participant-observation, you will learn about the operation, objectives, values, and challenges of the organization. It should be a group you are currently unconnected with, as I wish you to go through the traditional anthropological experience of getting to know 'the other'. You will be required to take detailed 'fieldnotes' on your observations, formulated further questions about the group as you go. I will collect your fieldnotebooks twice to read and respond to your fieldnotes: March 3rd and March 31st. At

the end of the semester you will be required to turn in your completed fieldnotes along with a 6-8 page ethnographic paper. (Due April 28th)

There are several reasons why I am asking you to do twenty full hours of volunteer service in your TPSL research location:

- Twenty hours is a meaningful amount of time to create an initial level understanding of a group or organization.
- Voluntary service will make it easier for you to access the daily operations of the group, and fits into anthropological methodologies of *participant*-observation.
- In any ethnographic project, big or small, the researcher is indebted to the group he/she studies. Through your voluntary efforts, you are able to repay or give back to the organization for the privilege of researching it.

Midterm and Final

There will be a midterm exam on March 10th, and a final exam on May 9th. Both exams will consist primarily of essay questions (both short and long). They will not be designed to surprised or trick you, but rather to assess how deeply you are engaging and thinking about the material and issues of the course. The final exam will address issues discussed throughout the course, and therefore be cumulative.

Academic Honesty:

Both Oxford College and I take the matter of academic honesty very seriously. I would like to remind you that you are required to follow the Honor Code. Any suspected breaches to the Honor Code will be referred to the Honor Council for review and possible disciplinary action. This includes acts of plagiarism. I have found in the past that many college students do not understand what does and does not constitute plagiarism. We will be discussing what constitutes plagiarism and proper citation methods later in the semester.

Course Schedule

Jan 20	Introductions
	Ethnography: The Art of Cultural Anthropology
Jan 25	Getting Below the Surface by Douglas Raybeck Tricking and Tripping: Fieldwork on Prostitution in the Era of AIDS by Claire Sterk (given out in class)
	Writing Women's Worlds – preface
Jan 27	Participant-Observation Writing Women's Worlds – chapters 1 and 2 First reading response due
Feb 1	Writing Women's Worlds – chapter 3
Feb 3	Writing Women's Worlds – chapters 4 and 5 reading response due

Feb 8	The Doing and "Writing Up" of Fieldwork Writing Women's Worlds – introduction Grief and the Headhunter's Rage by Renato Rosaldo (on reserve)
Feb 10	Chapters from Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes (on reserve) reading response due
Feb 15	Parallel Worlds chapters 1, 2, and 3
Feb 17	Parallel Worlds chapter 4 reading response due
Feb 22	Parallel Worlds chapters 5 and 6
Feb 24	Parallel Worlds chapter 7 reading response due
Mar 1	Parallel Worlds chapters 8 and 9
Mar 3	Parallel Worlds chapter 10 Turn in Ethnographic Fieldnotes reading response due
Mar 8	How Native is the Native Anthropologist? by Kirin Narayan
Mar 10	Midterm
March 14-18	Spring Break
Mar 22	Structure, Agency, Poverty, and Ethnicity Respect introduction and chapter 1
Mar 24	Respect chapters 2 and 3 reading response due
Mar 29	Respect chapters 4 and 5
Mar 31	Respect chapter 6 Turn in Ethnographic Fieldnotes reading response due
Apr 5	Respect chapters 7 and 8
Apr 7	Respect chapter 9 and Epilogue

reading response due

Apr 12	Learned Laughter: Ethnography in the Favelas Laughter introduction and chapter 1
Apr 14	Laughter chapter 2 reading response due
Apr 19	Laughter chapters 3 and 4
Apr 21	<u>Laughter</u> chapter 5 reading response due
Apr 26	Laughter chapters 6 and 7
Apr 28	Ethnography project and paper due
May 3	Last Day of Class
May 9	Final Exam (Monday 2-5 PM)