

Concepts and Methods in Cultural Anthropology

Anthropology 202

Spring 2007

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Office: 101 Language Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursday 1:30-4:00 PM

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. We will be addressing some emotionally charged topics, such as violence, gender relationships, racism, aging, and death with multiple cultural contexts. In the classroom we will discuss how to read, analyze, and respond to anthropological writings. You will be encouraged to read both critically and empathetically.

Course Objectives:

- Become familiar with predominant theories in cultural anthropology
- Become familiar with basic ethnographic methods
- Gain experience as ethnographic fieldworker, and begin developing skills of participant-observation, interviewing, taking fieldnotes
- Be able to discuss issues of change, continuity, agency, structure, stratification, religion, and ritual in cross-culture comparison
- Develop skills in reading and analyzing theoretical texts
- Develop a richer understanding of cultural relativity, and the challenges it poses

Required Texts

- Number Our Days, Culture and Community Among Elderly Jews in an American Ghetto by Barbara Myerhoff
- In Search of Respect, Selling Crack in El Barrio by Philippe Bourgois
- Tired of Weeping, Mother Love, Child Death, and Poverty in Guinea-Bissau by Jonina Einarsdottir
- White Saris and Sweet Mangos Aging, Gender, and Body in North India by Sarah Lamb
- Sections of: Death Without Weeping, the Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil by Nancy Scheper-Hughes
- Additional course readings available on Electronic Reserve

Grade Break Down:

Reading Quizzes:	10%
Weekly response papers:	20%
Attendance & Participation:	20%
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.

Final percentage points earned for these papers are tabulated as follows: check + = 2.0; check/check + = 1.8; check = 1.6; check/check minus = 1.4; check minus = 1.0

I will count the 10 highest paper grades together as 20% of your final grade. This allows you to miss two responses in the semester due to illness, emergency, or any other reason.

I would like ALL papers in hard copy, please do not send me response papers by e-mail.

Reading Quizzes

Each Tuesday there will be a reading quiz. This very short (usually 5 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 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. Your active participation at your TPSL site is expected.

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, formulating further questions about the group as you go. I will collect your field-notebooks during the semester and return them with comments. 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 May 1st) Rough drafts of this paper will be due April 19th. I will read your draft and meet with you individually to discuss it. In past years, students found this process extremely helpful.

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.

Final Exam

There will be a final exam, distributed on the last day of class and due Monday May 7th. This exam 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. The final will be a take-home exam, and your questions will be given during the last day of class, and collected during the assigned period in finals week. For the take home final you will be allowed to use your texts in answering your questions, and even discuss your ideas with, or seek writing help from friends or parents. **You are NOT allowed to discuss or share any aspect of your exam answers with any current or former Anthropology students.**

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 18	Introductions
Jan 23	<i>Ethnography: The Art of Cultural Anthropology</i> <i>Getting Below the Surface</i> by Douglas Raybeck <i>Tricking and Tripping: Fieldwork on Prostitution in the Era of AIDS</i> by Claire Sterk (e-reserve)
Jan 25	<i>Participant-Observation and the Fieldwork Process</i> <i>Grief and the Headhunter's Rage</i> by Renato Rosaldo (on reserve) reading response due
Jan 30	<u>Number Our Days</u> intro and chap 1
Feb 1	<u>Number Our Days</u> chapter 2 and 3 <i>The Goy in the Ghetto</i> (e-reserve) reading response due
Feb 6	<i>The Doing and "Writing Up" of Fieldwork</i> Chapters from <u>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes</u> (on reserve)
Feb 8	<u>Number Our Days</u> chapters 4 and 5 <i>How Native is the Native Anthropologist?</i> by Kirin Narayan (e-reserve) reading response due
Feb 13	<u>Number Our Days</u> chapters 6, 7, and epilogue

- Feb 15 White Saris Intro and Chapter 1
reading response due
- Feb 20 White Saris Chapters 2 and 3
The Goy in the Ghetto (e-reserve)
- Feb 22 White Saris Chapter 4 and 5
reading response due
- Feb 27 White Saris Chapter 6, 7, and afterword
Turn in Ethnographic Fieldnotes
- March 1 Death Without Weeping
- Mar 6 ***Structure, Agency, Poverty, and Ethnicity***
Death Without Weeping
- Mar 8 Death Without Weeping
reading response due
- March 12-16 Spring Break
- Mar 20 Death Without Weeping
- Mar 22 Death Without Weeping
reading response due
- Mar 27 Tired of Weeping Introduction and chapter 1
- Mar 29 Tired of Weeping chapters 2 and 3
Turn in Ethnographic Fieldnotes
reading response due
- Apr 3 Tired of Weeping chapter 4
- Apr 5 Tired of Weeping chapters 5 and conclusion
reading response due
- Apr 10 Article by Kwame Harrison (reserve)
- Apr 12 Respect introduction through chapter 2
reading response due
- Apr 17 Respect chapters 3 and 4

Apr 19 Respect chapters 5 and 6
reading response due
Ethnography Project Rough Draft Due

Apr 24 Respect chapters 7 and 8

Apr 26 Respect chapters 9 and Epilogue
reading response due

May 1 Last Day of Class
Ethnography project and paper due
Take Home Final passed out

Final Exam DUE Monday May 7th by 12 noon
(this is our exam period)