

Concepts and Methods in Cultural Anthropology

Anthropology 202

Spring 06

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Office Hours: Mondays 10:30-11:30, Tuesdays 3-4, Thursdays 10-11,

Fridays 10:30-11:30

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. 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

- Return to Laughter, an Anthropological Novel by Elenore Smith Bowen (aka Laura Bohannan)
- 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
- Laughter Out of Place, Race, Class, Violence, and Sexuality in a Rio Shantytown by Donna Goldstein
- Invitations to Love, Literacy, Love Letters, and Social Change in Nepal by Laura Ahearn
- Additional Course readings available on Electronic Reserve

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. 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 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, formulating further questions about the group as you go. I will collect your field-notebooks twice to read and respond to your fieldnotes: February 28th and March 30th. 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 2nd) I encourage you to turn in rough drafts of this paper on April 25th. I will read your draft and meet with you individually to discuss it. Last year 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.

Midterm and Final

There will be a midterm exam on March 2nd, and a final exam. The midterm will consist primarily of essay questions (both short and long). These exams 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.

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. 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 202 students.**

Course Schedule

Jan 19	Introductions
Jan 24	<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 26	<i>Participant-Observation and the Fieldwork Process</i> <i>Grief and the Headhunter's Rage</i> by Renato Rosaldo (on reserve) <u>Return to Laughter</u> chapters 1 and 2 reading response due
Jan 31	<u>Return to Laughter</u> chapter 3-7
Feb 2	<u>Return to Laughter</u> chapters 8-11 reading response due
Feb 7	<i>The Doing and "Writing Up" of Fieldwork</i> Chapters from <u>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes</u> (on reserve)
Feb 9	<u>Return to Laughter</u> chapters 12-16 reading response due
Feb 14	<u>Return to Laughter</u> chapters 17-21
Feb 16	<i>Ritual, Aging, and the 'Native' Anthropologist</i> <u>Number Our Days</u> intro and chapter 1 reading response due
Feb 21	<u>Number Our Days</u> chapter 2 and 3 The Goy in the Ghetto (e-reserve)

- Feb 23 Number Our Days chapters 4 and 5
How Native is the Native Anthropologist?
 by Kirin Narayan (e-reserve)
 reading response due
- Feb 28 Number Our Days chapters 6, 7, and epilogue
Turn in Ethnographic Fieldnotes
- Mar 2 **MIDTERM**
 Ethnographic fieldnotes returned to you
- Mar 7 *Structure, Agency, Poverty, and Ethnicity*
Respect introduction through chapter 2
- Mar 9 Respect chapters 3 and 4
 reading response due
- March 13-17 Spring Break
- Mar 21 Respect chapters 5 and 6
- Mar 23 Respect chapters 7 and 8
 reading response due
- Mar 28 Respect chapters 9 and Epilogue
- March 29: Required Oxford Studies Event 7 PM Williams Hall**
Dr. John Burdick:
Rap, Gospel, and Racial Identity in Sao Paulo, Brazil
- Mar 30 *Learned Laughter: Ethnography in the Favelas*
Laughter introduction and chapter 1
Turn in Ethnographic Fieldnotes
 reading response due
- Apr 4 Laughter chapter 2
 Ethnographic Fieldnotes Returned to You
- Apr 6 Laughter chapter 3 and 4
 reading response due
- Apr 11 Laughter chapters 5 and 6
- Apr 13 Laughter chapter 7
 reading response due

- Apr 18 *Love, Literacy, and Social Change*
 Invitations to Love preface-chapter 3
- Apr 20 Invitations chapters 4 and 5
 reading response due
- Apr 25 Invitations chapters 6-8
 Ethnography Project Rough Draft Due (Optional)
- Apr 27 Invitations chapters 9-10
 reading response due
- May 2 Last Day of Class
 Ethnography project and paper due
 Take Home Final passed out

Final Exam DUE Friday May 5th by 5 PM
(this is our exam period)