

# **Concepts and Methods in Cultural Anthropology**

Anthropology 202

Spring 2011

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Oxford College of Emory University

Office: 101 Language Hall

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:30-2:30 or by appointment. (Making an appointment is the BEST way to meet with me in person. Please email me for an appointment or for any other concern.

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## **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 dominant 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
- Improve personal writing skills

### **Grade Break Down:**

Reading Quizzes:	10%
Short response papers:	20% (2% each)
Attendance & Participation:	20%
Final Reflective Essay	15%
Ethnographic project:	35%
(Fieldnotes 15%, rough draft 5%, and ethnographic paper 15%)	

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Total: 100%

### **Short Response Papers:**

You will be required to turn in a short (two-three page) response paper each Thursday. 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 a couple responses 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**

Once or twice a week, there will be a reading quiz. This very short 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. *If you are absent or late to class, you will not be allowed to make up a reading quiz.* I will count your 10 highest quiz grades at the end of the semester for a total of 10% of your final grade. Before spring break, reading quizzes will be given every Tuesday. After spring break there will be a reading quiz almost daily.

### **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. You will need to post your fieldnotes electronically within 48 hours after each session "in the field" (i.e. at your TPSL site). I will be responding to your fieldnotes every two or three weeks on a rotating basis. 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 27<sup>th</sup>) Rough drafts of this paper will be due April 15<sup>th</sup>. 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 minimum meaningful amount of time to create an initial level understanding of a group or organization.
- Service learning 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 service efforts, you are able to repay or give back to the organization for the privilege of researching it.

### **Final Reflection**

The final assignment will be distributed on the last day of class and due during the final exam period. This final reflection or 'mini exam' will not be designed to surprise or trick you, but rather to assess how deeply you have engaged and thought about the material and issues of the course. You will be allowed to use your texts in answering your questions. **You are NOT allowed to discuss or share any aspect of your reflection with any current or former Anthropology students.** This assignment will be worth 10% of your final grade.

### **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.

### **Required Texts**

- In Search of Respect, Selling Crack in El Barrio by Philippe Bourgois
- River of Tears, Country Music, Memory, and Modernity in Brazil by Alexander Sebastian Dent
- Our Women are Free, Gender and Ethnicity in the Hindukush by Wynne Maggi
- Number Our Days: A Triumph of Continuity and Culture Among Jewish Old People in an Urban Ghetto by Barbara Myerhoff
- Additional course readings available on Electronic Reserve

### **Course Schedule**

Jan 19	Introductions
Jan 24	<b><i>Ethnography: The Art of Cultural Anthropology</i></b> <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) <b>First Quiz</b>
Jan 26	<b><i>Participant-Observation and the Fieldwork Process</i></b> <i>Grief and the Headhunter's Rage</i> by Renato Rosaldo (on reserve) <b>First Reading response due</b>
Jan 31	<i>How Native is the Native Anthropologist?</i> by Kirin Narayan (on e-reserve) <i>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes chapter 2</i> Reading Quiz
Feb 2	<i>Anthropological Theory Since the 1960's</i> by Sherry Ortner (on ereserve) <i>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes chapter 4</i> <b>Second Response paper due</b>
Feb 7	<u>Number Our Days</u> Intro- chapter 2 Reading Quiz
Feb 9	<u>Number Our Days</u> chapters 3 and 4 <i>The Goy in the Ghetto</i> (e reserve) <b>response paper due</b>
Feb 14	<u>Number Our Days</u> chapters 5 and 6 reading quiz
Feb 16	<u>Number Our Days</u> chapter 7 and epilogue <b>response paper due</b>

Feb 21	<u>Our Women are Free</u> Intro and Chapter 1 reading quiz
Feb 23	<u>Our Women are Free</u> chapters 2 and 3 <b>reading response due</b>
Feb 28	<u>Our Women are Free</u> chapters 4 and 5 reading quiz
March 2	<u>Our Women are Free</u> chapters 6 and conclusion <b>reading response due</b>
March 7-11	Spring Break <b><i>THERE WILL BE NO WORK ASSIGNED OVER SPRING BREAK. I WANT ALL STUDENTS TO TAKE BREAK FROM THIS COURSE, AND COME BACK REFRESHED AND READY TO WORK HARD FOR SEVEN MORE WEEKS</i></b>
March 14	Fieldwork discuss
Mar 16	<u>River of Tears</u> intro and chapter 1 Reading response due
Mar 21	<u>River of Tears</u> chapters 2 and 3 Quiz
Mar 23	<u>River of Tears</u> chapters 4 and 5 Reading response due
Mar 28	<u>River of Tears</u> chapters 6 and 7 Quiz
Mar 30	<u>River of Tears</u> chapters 8 and conclusion <b>response paper due</b>
April 4	<u>In Search of Respect</u> intro, chapters 1 & 2 quiz
April 6	<u>Respect</u> chapters 3 and 4 <b>Response Paper Due</b>
April 11	<u>Respect</u> chapters 5 and 6 quiz
April 13	<u>Respect</u> chapters 7 and 8 <b>Response Paper Due</b>

April 18	class cancelled (Passover)
April 20	<u>Respect</u> chapters 9 and Epilogue Reading quiz Final Reflection assignment passed out <b><i>Ethnography Project Rough Draft Due</i></b>
April 25	Last Day of Class <b><i>Final Reflection DUE</i></b>