

## ANTHROPOLOGY 101: Introduction to Anthropology

Class #5301 • Sec #02A1

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**Class room:** Seney 215

**Meeting times:** M,W—2:30-4:10

**Office Hours:** by appointment

*[The anthropologist] is interested in human behavior, not as it is shaped by one tradition, [one's] own, but as it has been shaped by any tradition whatsoever. He [sic] is interested in the great gamut of custom that is found in various cultures, and his object is to understand the way in which these cultures change and differentiate, the different forms through which they express themselves, and the manner in which the customs of any peoples function in the lives of the individuals who compose them. —Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture, 1934.*

### OVERVIEW:

In anthropology, as in every other science, we try to look beyond what seem to be obvious, everyday experiences and to discover the underlying structures, patterns and meanings in the world that lie behind what we assume is there. Using empirical evidence and scholarly analysis, anthropology addresses the issues of humans and their interaction with one another and the world around them across time and space. The materials that make up the world around us, and the practices that we engage in, are more than physical objects and events, they also carry meaning in a human world. If we are to understand this world we must think beyond the individual moments and materials that we come in contact with and consider the larger symbolic structures and systems of relations that hold the human universe together<sup>1</sup>. An anthropological truism is that the discipline makes the familiar strange as it makes the strange familiar. In other words, studying the different ways that people around the world live their everyday lives cannot but help make us wonder about and see our own practices (whatever those may be) in very different ways.

An introductory course such as this one necessarily only brushes the surface of many topics. Yet one of the key goals of this course is to provide students with an understanding of anthropology's holistic approach to studying humanity. We will touch on each of anthropology's four subdisciplines: **cultural anthropology, biological anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics**, paying particular attention to their interactions and overlaps. The fact that this is an introductory course means that we begin at the beginning. It does not mean that the course will be easy. Being able to think like an anthropologist and see the world as an anthropologist does is not an end in itself, but can help you be more aware of how the world around you works. This is useful if you want to be a parent, an executive, a medical worker, or a designer. But just hearing about other cultures will not help you think like an anthropologist, you will have to practice anthropology, too. To help this happen, this class is designed around a series of group projects that will send you out to *do* anthropology and to share your findings with your fellow students.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** The course is designed to enhance students' abilities toward the following IDEA form goals:

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<sup>1</sup> Culler, Jonathan 1977. "In Pursuit of Signs," IN Daedalus 106 pp. 95-112.

- **Gaining Factual Knowledge:** *You will be expected to seek to understand and apply basic anthropological concepts, terminology and methods for studying culture and humanity*, and in doing so to analytically engage with your own communities' assumptions of norms, values, and practices.
- **Learning to Apply Course Material** to improve thinking, problem solving and decision-making. *We will engage in the practice of anthropology/ethnography.* In small ways, we will be *practicing* anthropology and learning about some of its methods as we learn *about* it. From learning to use the disciplinary tools of the library to gathering artifacts from the media and our own lives, we will explore popular ideas of anthropology alongside academic and personal experiences.
- **Acquiring skills in working with others** as a member of a team. Outside of college, you will often be expected to work in teams. Grants are written by teams of scholars, businesses use team-based approaches to problem solving, health workers solve complex medical problems in groups, and issues involving politics and culture need teams of experts to more effectively understand the interfaces between people and the environment, people and the economy, people and their biology.

Specifically, we will engage in answering the following disciplinary questions in order to accomplish the above goals:

- What are anthropology's four fields and why do anthropologists use a holistic four-field approach to understanding the world?
- How does understanding the connections between culture and biology, language, and material culture help us to solve problems such as disease, political strife, and what it means to be human?
- What are some of the specialized terms anthropologists use (relativism, myth, symbolism, kinship, reflexivity, social Darwinism, material culture etc.) and why are such terms useful?
- How does one *practice* anthropology in everyday life? How do we look at the everyday things around us in an anthropological way to see the deeper cultural meaning embedded in those things we take for granted?
- How can anthropology help us to understand, respect and learn from cultural difference?

**REQUIRED READINGS:** Books are available at the Oxford College Bookstore. Additional articles are available on blackboard. You are required to bring your readings (books and articles) to class. I (and your group) will expect you to have read, taken notes on, and marked up your text. Please complete the readings on or before the date listed in the syllabus.

Books:

- Podolefsky, Aaron et. al. 2009. *Applying Cultural Anthropology An Introductory Reader*. McGraw Hill
- Wogan, Peter. 2004 *Magical Writing in Salasaca: Literacy and Power in Highland Ecuador*, Edward F. Fisher (ed.), Boulder Willamette, Westview Press.

**ATTENDANCE & BEING ON TIME:** Please be a good colleague and team player. Show up to class on time and ready to work.

**COMPUTERS, CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES:** Note taking in this class is critical, but you should not need to rely on a computer. My experience with computers in the classroom is that they provide more of a distraction than assistance, and I ask that they remain put away during class time unless they are being used for presentation or group work purposes. Bring them if you need them for your group work. But please do not text or otherwise use your electronic devices in ways that will distract (you or others) from classroom work. Cellphones should be turned OFF (not on vibrate or silent) in the classroom and kept in your backpack (NOT on the top of your desk). Electronic devices of any kind are not allowed during tests or quizzes and should be put away out of sight.



## ASSESSMENT:

Your grade in this class depends on the following components (the blanks indicate weights that will be set by you as a class within the specified ranges):

			Weights	
Individual Performance				>=10%
	Individual Quizzes		[10-50%]	
	Final Exam		[50-90%]	
Team Performance				>=10%
	Team Quizzes		33%	
	Module Assess		67%	
Peer Evaluation				>=10%
Total				=100%

### *Individual Performance - Quizzes*

Each module of the course begins with one or two timed multiple-choice quizzes designed to assess your comprehension of the assigned readings and to ensure you're prepared for subsequent discussion and exercises. The quizzes will be given in class (see course schedule below for specific dates) and will be "open book" and "open notes" (meaning you may consult either the assigned readings themselves or your own notes during the quiz). Graded quizzes will be returned the following week.

Note: the lowest quiz score you receive will be dropped from your final grade computation (including any zeros received for absences).

### *Individual Performance - Final Exam*

A final exam *will* be administered for this class, **7:00-10:00pm Tuesday Dec. 17** (location to be confirmed later, but probably in the room where class usually meets). The format will resemble that of the quizzes in general except that 1) it will cover all readings as well as all material presented during lecture or discussion, 2) it will be *neither* open book *nor* open notes.

### *Team Performance - Quizzes*

Immediately after completing the quizzes individually you will be asked to take *the same quiz* as a team (all members of the team receiving the same score as one another). As with the individual quizzes, the team quizzes will be timed but will also be "open book/open notes." These will be scored immediately in class, the results posted, and the answers discussed.

### *Team Performance - Module Assessments*

Aside from the lectures and readings-based quizzes, a good portion of our time in class will be spent on **team exercises** that involve the application of the ideas and concepts discussed to specific questions, problems, or tasks. The responses, solutions, or products of individual teams will be simultaneously presented to the rest of the class, followed by comparison and discussion of the results. Outside of their indirect impact on your peer evaluations, these exercises are not graded.

However, each module culminates in a **team assessment**, which is essentially a project related to those given previously in the module but is also graded (earlier exercises therefore essentially allow the team to gather knowledge for the final project). The criteria for these assessments will vary but in general will be provided prior to the assessment itself. Team scores on assessments will be provided to the class as a whole the following week.

### *Peer Evaluation*

The final component of your grade in this course will be determined by your teammates in the form of an anonymous peer evaluation. In general the primary criteria for this evaluation are to include: 1) your level of preparation in class, 2) your productive contribution to group discussion and work, 3) the degree to which you encouraged other members to contribute their ideas, and 4) your flexibility and diplomacy in cases of disagreement. In practical terms, your peer evaluation score will be the mean of the scores you receive from each of your teammates. A trial peer evaluation will be provided mid-way through the term, along with details on its computation.

### *Extra Credit/Make-Up Work*

There will be no opportunities to earn "extra credit." In general if you miss a class there will be no opportunity to retake missed quizzes or (obviously) participate in team exercises/assessments. Make-up work (e.g. in cases of medical or family emergency) will be assigned individually on an as-needed basis.

### **THE SMALL PRINT:**

***Student Honor Code:*** As a student of Oxford College you are bound by the Student Honor Code and are responsible "for maintaining standards of unimpeachable honesty in all academic work....The Honor Code is based on the fundamental expectations that every person in Oxford College will conduct his or her life according to the dictates of the Honor Code and will refuse to tolerate actions in others which would violate the honor code" ([http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current\\_students/Academic/academic-success/student-honor-code/](http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current_students/Academic/academic-success/student-honor-code/)).

*Student work submitted as part of this course may be reviewed by Oxford College and Emory College faculty and staff for the purposes of improving instruction and enhancing Emory education.*

*One of the key benefits of a liberal arts education is the instructor's ability to react to students' needs, interests and abilities. In the spirit of providing you with an education that remains responsive to particular contexts, **this syllabus and schedule are subject to change.***

***Disabilities:*** If you are a student with a documented disability on record and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class please make an appointment to see me in my office. If you need a note taker please see me immediately after class.

***Religious Holidays:*** If you must miss class for a religious holiday, please notify me, in writing, one week before class in order to be excused (assignments due on a particular day must still be turned in on or before the day specified).