

Fun and Games
Reading Questions, Week 2

Geertz (read first)

1. How does Geertz define deep play and how does he use the concept? Can you think of other examples? What makes the Balinese cockfight deep play?
2. How do the Balinese define what it means to be a person? How do they define what it means to be a man? How does this differ from other cultures you're familiar with? Is there anything more you might want to know than what Geertz tells us here?
3. What role does gambling play in making the cockfight deep? And what is the difference between "money gambling" and "status gambling"?
4. What do you need to know about Balinese society to understand how the cockfight is organized and what it means to participants? Alternately, what does knowing about how the cockfight is organized and what it means to participants tell us about Balinese society?
5. On page 452, Geertz gives a theory of what culture is and a method for studying it. How does his theory relate to his method? How does this essay exemplify his theory and method? Review the opening section with this question in mind.

Haring

6. How does Haring develop the category of "technical hobby" and how does she use this category, once defined, to construct an object of study? What does she include/exclude? Do you agree?
7. According to Haring, how does participation in a technical hobby contribute to the formation of personal identity? How does technical identity relate to other forms of identity (e.g., masculinity) in the culture she's discussing?

Whiting

8. How does Japanese baseball reflect Japanese culture? How does American baseball reflect American culture? What are the implications for thinking about how the game is played by participants and how it is viewed by spectators?

Laslo

9. Drawing on your own experiences at MIT and elsewhere, reflect on the play elements in science. What are the implications for thinking about what "play" is and what "science" is?