
ANTH 3

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Winter 15
MWF 10-11:05 pm x: Th 12-12:50 pm
Rockefeller 001
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Overview

Cultural anthropology explores what shapes communities worldwide. In the broadest terms, cultural anthropologists study “*culture*”—defined as the process of ordering social life and making it meaningful in a range of settings. We are interested in all types of societies, from rural indigenous communities to life in urban industrial settings. Cultural anthropologists document and comparatively analyze the full range of human social forms and adaptations, discern themes and patterns in the human experience, and examine processes of and resistance to change in a range of socioeconomic, geographic, and political contexts.” In this class, you will learn about cultural anthropology as a scholarly practice and profession, including research methods and ethics, and the ways anthropologists represent their research to varied audiences.

Goals

- Understand “culture” as a *process* of sense-making.
- Define key terms and concepts in anthropology in your own words, and recognize some prominent anthropologists and their contributions to our understanding of the world.
- Develop an understanding of the ways anthropologists use ethnography to understand and translate cultural similarity and difference.
- Understand and evaluate the historical development of anthropology.
- Complicate the “savage slot” by explaining the relationship between global & local processes of cultural production.
- Reflect on your own cultural biases and enhance your understanding of, and appreciation for, human difference.

Assignments

1. Quizzes (10%)
2. Ethnographic Exercise (20%)
3. Midterm Examination (25%)
4. Hood Museum Essay (20%)
5. Final Examination (25%)

Format

Interactive lecture. Topics and readings will be clarified not through long lectures but rather focused summaries, direct questioning, and guided discussions. Oral participation is mandatory and will provide an opportunity for you to shape the discussion and explore your particular interests.

Books

- Lassiter, Luke. *Invitation to Anthropology* (4th edition)
- Knauff, Bruce. *The Gebusi*
- Bourgois, Philippe. *In Search of Respect*
- Farmer, Paul. *AIDS and Accusation*

Rules

- RESPECT
- No electronic device (cell phone or laptop) should be used in class unless you have my permission.
- Uphold Dartmouth’s Principles of the Community
<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~deancoll/student-handbook/principles.html>
- Give credit where credit is due.
<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/sources>
- Speak up! If you have any issue (e.g., religious observance, family duties, disability, illness) that hinders your participation in this course, please see me to make arrangements.
- Please be patient with e-mail. I try to respond to class e-mail within 24 hours.

Milestones

Feb 9: Midterm Exam

Feb. 20: Ethnographic Exercise Due

Mar. 9: Hood Essay Due

Mar. 13: Final Exam

Assignments

Monte Carlo Quizzes

The success of this class depends on your preparation and participation. I will evaluate your preparation based on in class commentary and a series of Monte Carlo quizzes that will be assessed on a four-tier “check” scale, providing constructive feedback as needed. *Rules:* A Monte Carlo quiz is like other pop quizzes, except that the decision to administer the quiz, the particular question posed, and the particular reading under scrutiny are determined by chance. At the start of class, a student will roll a die. If the student rolls a 1 or 3, a quiz will be given. A second roll will indicate which question will be answered, and a third will determine which reading will be the subject of the quiz. The questions will be selected from the three “guiding questions” on the syllabus. (Two die numbers are assigned to each question.) You can use your notes as well as the readings. You will have *five minutes* to complete the quiz. Answers will be graded as follows: (1) check plus: your answer is clearly formulated, accurate, and demonstrates a sound understanding of the reading/concepts; (2) check: your answer is mostly correct, demonstrates some familiarity with reading, but is incomplete or awkwardly formulated; (3) check minus: the answer is partially correct, demonstrates minimal familiarity with reading, or is poorly formulated; (4) zero: the answer demonstrates no familiarity with the reading. *Missed classes.* Daily attendance is imperative. I will excuse one absence/quiz. If you miss additional classes, you will forfeit any quizzes. If you do not miss any classes, you may drop your lowest quiz grade.

Ethnographic Exercise

The ethnographic exercise is designed to give students a more “hands on” introduction to ethnographic research methods and anthropological practice, and to engage in critical and creative assessments of Dartmouth culture as an anthropologist would. The specific assignment will be discussed in class during week two, and it is due week seven.

Midterm and Final Exams

Examinations will be given in-class and will consist of identification/definitions, short answers, and essays. Questions will be drawn from readings, lectures, and films. The **midterm exam** will cover material from the first half of the course. The **final exam** will be weighted toward material covered in the second half of the course, but the essay questions will ask you to consider material from the entire term.

Hood Museum of Art Essay

The one sustained writing assignment of the course will be drawn from our engagement with an art exhibit at the Hood Museum of Art: *Made in the Middle: Constructing Black Identities Across the African Diaspora*. Curated specifically for this course, this exhibit participates in the anthropological project to reveal the social, cultural, and historical production of identity and difference. We will visit the exhibit, participate in structured viewings, attend a lecture by an expert in African and African diasporic art, and regularly refer to these works throughout the course. You will then be asked to pick two to three works of art as the basis for a visual anthropology essay (approximately 1500 words). In the essay, you will use these works as forums for elaborating general themes emergent from course readings, lectures, and discussion. Themes are as follows, with recognition that these are not mutually exclusive:

- Legacies of Colonialism
- Race and Racialization
- Gender and Sexuality
- Authenticity and Culture
- Ritual and Social Change
- Bodies and Subjectivity
- Global Flows (of objects, bodies, & values)
- The Making of Anthropology

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

Monday, Jan. 5: *Introduction to the Course and Aims of Cultural Anthropology*

Readings: Lee, Richard Eating Christmas in the Kalahari

Guiding Questions: What is anthropology and how might it help us understand our own lives, as well as the lives of others? Why is studying other people a valuable endeavor?

Wednesday, Jan. 7 *Race, An Anthropological History*

Readings: Lassiter, Ch. 1;

Boas, F., *The Methods of Ethnology*;

Look at the website: <http://www.understandingrace.org/home.html>

Guiding Questions: Why did Frans Boas, the ‘founding father’ of American anthropology, argue that many categories of difference often attributed to ‘race’ are much more accurately understood as variations in culture and patterns of human variation? How did this powerful argument relate to the times in which Boas was writing? How does the Boasian legacy endure today?

Thursday, Jan. 8 (x-hour): *Made in the Middle*—viewing 1

**Students with last names in the first half of alphabet (A-M) will meet at the Hood Museum for this class period.

Friday, Jan 9. *Made in the Middle*—viewing 2

**Students with last names in the last half of alphabet (N-Z) will meet at the Hood Museum for this class period.

Guiding Questions: What is identity? Can an identity be a *tragedy*? How has anthropology participated in the construction and deconstruction of racial identities?

WEEK 2

Monday, Jan. 12 *Definitions of Culture*

Readings Lassiter, Ch. 2

Knauff, Ch. 1 & 2

Williams, R., *Keywords: Culture*

Guiding Questions: What are some of the different positions anthropologists have taken on the definition of culture? Why are we tempted to view culture as somehow bounded, constant, or static even though it often proves to be just the opposite? In what ways is culture a scientific concept?

Wednesday, Jan 14 *Methods of Ethnography*

Readings Lassiter, Ch. 3

Knauff, Ch. 3

Rosaldo, Renaldo, *Grief and a Headhunter’s Rage*

Guiding Questions: What is ethnography? What are some of the other methods, assumptions, and ethical stances that anthropologists have adopted in the process of doing fieldwork? What is behind the idea of ‘going native’ or being an ethnographer in one’s own society?

****Distribution of Ethnographic Exercise**

Friday, January 16 *Ethics of Ethnography*

Readings Scheper-Hughes, Nancy, *The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology*

Look at website: <http://ethics.aaanet.org/ethics-statement-0-preamble/>

Guiding Questions: What are the guiding ethical principles of anthropology? How does the principle of cultural relativism enable ethical relations with anthropology’s subjects? Conversely, how might it hinder an ethical commitment to knowledge production or even a political commitment to social change?

WEEK 3

Monday, Jan. 19 *Disciplinary Trajectories* MLK Day—NO CLASS

Watch film: “Anthropology on Trial” **stream at home**

Guiding Questions: Why was the work of Margaret Mead so revolutionary for mid-twentieth century America? In what ways did it exemplify the anthropological stance of cultural relativism? How and why has her work faced more contemporary criticism?

Wednesday, Jan. 21 *Politics of Representation*

Reading Trouillot, Michel, *Anthropology and the Savage Slot*
Hartigan, *Complicating Whiteness*

Watch film: “Cannibal Tours” **stream at home**

Guiding Questions: What is the “savage slot,” and how is it tied to colonial hierarchies? How have ethnographic representations reproduced colonial mindsets; how have they challenged them? How do “natives” appropriate colonial, ethnographic imagery and retool them in subversive ways?

Friday, Jan. 23 *Politics of Representation, cont.*

Watch film: “The Gods Must Be Crazy” **stream at home**

Suppl. Readings Sahlins, Marshall, *The Original Affluent Society*

Gordon, Robert & Douglas, Stuart, *The Bushman Myth* (selections)

Guiding Questions: What are the myths of the Bushmen? How have anthropologists contributed to this mythology; how have they debunked it? In what ways has the myth of the Bushmen been as much about life beyond the Kalahari as within it?

****Class visit by Ugochukwu-Smooth Nzewi, PhD, Hood Museum Curator of African Art.**

****Hood Museum of Art Essay sheet distributed**

WEEK 4

Monday, Jan 26 *Human Adaptations and Historical Contingencies*

Readings Lassiter, Ch. 4
Knauff, Ch. 7, 8, 9

Guiding Questions: How have different human communities adapted to their environments over time? What are some of the ways culture and environment are interrelated? How have human experiences been further shaped by large-scale political transitions, such as the formation of particular types of states or colonialism?

Wednesday, Jan. 28 *Historical and Structural Ethnography*

Readings Bourgois, Introduction, Ch. 1, and 2

Guiding Questions: What is the “culture of poverty” theory, and how is Bourgois’ argument similar yet different? How does his introductory chapters about the segregation and history of el barrio develop his argument about structural oppression? How does this approach differ from other ethnographies we have read thus far?

Friday, Jan. 30 *The Anthropology of Deviance*

Readings Bourgois, Ch. 3, 4, 5

Guiding Questions: What are some of the structural or economic factors that have directed the lives of young men in el barrio toward criminality? What is “cultural capital,” and how does the concept help explain the experiences of people in el barrio at school and at work? How does Bourgois explain the role violence plays in socializing young men in el barrio?

WEEK 5

Monday, Feb. 2 *Gender and Power*

Readings Bourgois, Ch. 6,7, 8, 9

Guiding Questions: Identities are not neutral. They take shape and attain their significance through a field of power. How does Bourgois relate gender norms to the subjugation and empowerment of particular bodies? Identities are also not static. They evolve with their social contexts. What happens when “traditional” and “modern” gender roles interact in el barrio? What policy changes does Bourgois propose to help his informants, and do you agree or disagree with them?

Wednesday, Feb. 4 *The Culture of Sex and Gender*

Readings Lassiter, Ch. 5

Martin, Emily, *The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypes*

Williams, *The Berdache Tradition*

Guiding Questions: While biology certainly frames and defines much of what human beings share and what being human means, culture certainly does too. How is gender a product of culture? In what ways do sex and gender differ? How do we enact social roles that are ‘naturalized’ as biological?

Friday, Feb. 6 Winter Carnival—NO CLASS

WEEK 6

Monday, Feb. 9 **MID-TERM**

Wednesday, Feb. 11 *Kinship, Marriage, and Family*

Readings Lassiter, Ch. 6

Knauff, Ch. 4, 5

Guiding Questions: Marriage and the creation of extended networks of kin (people you are related to by birth and by marriage) are near human universals. Yet the meanings we ascribe to marriage and kinship vary. What does it mean to say you are related to someone? What are the different types of cultural values ascribed to creating, honoring, and sustaining kinship networks? How do kinship networks relate to other aspects of social, political, and economic life?

Film Showing: “Mozayik” (4:30 pm Haldeman 041)

Friday, Feb. 13 *Rites of Passage*

Readings Turner, V. *Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage* (selection)

Knauff, Ch. 6

Geertz, C., *Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight*

Guiding Questions: Rituals provide us with a way of making sense and making meaning at times of change or transition in human experience. What is a ‘rite of passage’? What do rituals ‘do’ in a social sense? How are rituals connected to systems of belief or what we might think of as ‘religion’?

WEEK 7

Monday, Feb. 16 *Wellness and Illness across Cultures*

Readings Farmer, Paul, Part I. (Ch. 1 – 6)

Guiding Questions: Illness and different forms of bio-psycho-social suffering are, in a sense, human universals. However, not all societies confront the same risks of disease and death. Furthermore, cultures or groups of people interpret and respond to disease with tremendous variability. What structural factors rendered the people of Do Kay susceptible to AIDS? How did people associate this new disease with other developments in their lives? How did Haitian cultural parameters shape their ways of making sense of the new disease?

Wednesday, Feb. 18 *Magic, Witchcraft, and Questions of Causality*

Readings Evans-Pritchard, E.E., *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (selections)
Farmer, Paul, Ch. 7, 8, 9

Supplemental Material: “Witchcraft among the Azande” (streamed film)

Guiding Questions: Ok, so something bad happened to you. But *why* did it happen? Why did it happen to *you*? These questions are, in a sense, human universals. However, the ways different cultural groups answer such questions vary considerably. How did Haitian cultural models of sorcery shape their experience of illness? How were their concepts of magic and witchcraft logical? What did these practices accomplish, in a social sense?

Friday, Feb. 20 *Race, Politics, and Questions of Blame*

Readings Farmer, Paul, Ch. 19, 20, 21

Guiding Questions: How do patterns of diagnosis participate in the ranking of societies and people? How do negative representations of a nation or culture help construct understandings of disease? What might the blame-game over an illness conceal or reveal about the body politic or geopolitics?

****Ethnographic Exercise Due**

WEEK 8

Monday, Feb. 23 *Gifts and Commodities*

Readings Mauss, The Gift (selections)
Malinowski, Bronislaw, *The Essentials of the Kula*

Guiding Questions: What are the differences between a ‘gift’ and a commodity? What is behind the adage that there are ‘no free gifts’—or, in other words, why is reciprocity obligatory? How are practices of gift giving and exchange tied to larger systems of social and economic exchange?

Wednesday, Feb. 24 *Global Transformations: Capital Flows*

Readings Ho, Karen, *Situating Global Capitalism: A View from Wall Street Investment Banks*
Comaroff, Jean, and Comaroff, John, *Occult Economies and The Violence of Abstraction*

Guiding Questions: The term ‘globalization’ is a way of talking about the flow of goods, ideas, and capital around the world. While the pace of such exchange and the implications of globalization processes may be new, globalization is also a new way of thinking about very long histories of exchange. What makes globalization, as we understand it today, unique? What are some of the ways you are implicated in the world system, the global economy? How do people mobilize established belief systems to interpret and respond to global forces?

Friday, Feb. 26 *Global Transformations: Bodies and Subjectivities*

Readings Brown, Jacqueline Nassy, *Black Liverpool, Black America, and the Gendering of Diasporic Space*
Clarke, Kamari Maxine, *Mapping Transnationality: Roots Tourism and the Institutionalization of Ethnic Heritage*

Guiding Questions: How have understandings of race evolved amid global flow of bodies, objects, and subjectivities? How do racial stereotypes restrict forms of expression, success, and empowerment in a global age? Conversely, how might transnational identities offer novel forms of expression, success, and empowerment?

WEEK 9

Monday, Mar. 2 Colonial Legacies: Development

Readings: Ferguson, James, Anthropology and Its Evil Twin: 'Development' in the Constitution of a Discipline
Garland, Elizabeth, Developing Bushmen
Kivland, Chelsey, To Defend or Develop? On the Politics of Engagement Among Local Organizations, Before and After the Earthquake

Guiding Questions: What does 'development' mean, and in what ways is this meaning contested? How do contemporary development projects relate to the history of colonialism in different parts of the world and ideas about 'progress' and 'civilization'? How and why might anthropology and development be construed as 'evil twins'?

Wednesday, Mar. 4 Colonial Legacies: Migration and Violence

Readings Glick-Schiller, Nina, "Everywhere We Go, We Are in Danger": Ti Manno and the Emergence of a Haitian Transnational Identity

Watch film: "The Deported" view **in class**

Guiding Questions: What are some of the ways that cultural groups have adapted to experiences of displacement, forced migration, or other forms of movement into new territories and social spaces? How does being a migrant, living in diaspora, or being repatriated affect a person's or a community's identity? How do people who straddle cultural, linguistic, and/or geopolitical borders retain a sense of cultural coherence and fluidity, often simultaneously?

Friday, Mar. 6: Reconsidering 'Self' and 'Other'

Readings Basso, Keith, 'Indian models of "the Whiteman"' (In *Portraits of "The Whiteman": Linguistic Play and Cultural Symbols among the Western Apache*)

Guiding Questions: After all we have learned this term, how do you make sense of the idea of self versus other? What types of power dynamics does this involve? How might you engage in new ways with people who are either similar to you or different than you after taking this class?

WEEK 10

Monday, Mar. 9: Culminating Discussion and Final Exam Review

****Hood Museum of Art Essay Due in Class**

Friday, Mar. 13 8 a.m.: FINAL EXAM