

Syllabus

SC003 Introduction to Cultural Anthropology Spring 2007 Tuesday and Thursday 1:30 to 2:50PM O'Neil 211

Professor: Jim Hamm
Office: McGuinn 426D
Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday by appointment
email: hammj@bc.edu

About the course

This course is an introduction to cultural anthropology. It is not being offered as a course for anthropology majors but for students who may never take another anthropology course. Consequently, you will not be required to learn technical jargon that would only interest anthropology majors. Instead, we will focus on what anthropology has to contribute to an understanding of the social issues of our times.

The first part of the course, "Setting the Stage," will overview two of anthropology's four subfields - cultural anthropology and physical anthropology. The goal of this part of the course is to suggest bases for the issues we will cover in the second part of the course. We will frame the subject of cultural anthropology and review current theories of human evolution.

The second part of the course is about current issues such as marriage and the family, sex and gender, religion, economy, political organization and social control, migration, social stratification and globalization - issues that anthropologists are currently addressing.

The course will take a radical view of contemporary issues. We will attempt to "think outside the box."

Requirements

Class attendance and keeping up with the readings are critical. If you don't do the readings, I end up doing all the talking and that is boring for everyone.

There are no right or wrong answers. Anthropology is not about discovering the truth. Its about developing interpretations.

You will be required to prepare four two-page papers on assigned topics. You must write the papers within the context of the course. The papers are due in class on the assigned dates. You will lose twenty (20) percentage points if you hand the paper in late - up to one week late.

After that, the paper will not be accepted. Late papers may be turned into my mailbox in McGuinn 426.

You have a rewrite option (only if you handed the paper in on time). Rewrites are due in class one week after the papers are returned. If you choose this option, you will receive the higher grade.

There is a suggested approach for writing a formal paper in the reader. You are not required to use this format. It has an advantage in that you will know how to get started.

Each Tuesday, there will be a quiz on the assigned readings and the film(s) for that week. The purpose of the quiz is to have you keep up with the readings and films. The format of the quiz will be true/false, multiple choice, matching and occasionally a question requiring a short answer. If you have read and viewed the films, the quizzes are easy.

There will be a mid-term exam and a final exam.

Grading

The course grade is composed of three parts of equal weight (33.3 per cent) - (1) classroom - the papers and the quizzes, (2) the mid-term and (3) the final.

Since the papers and the quizzes account for one-third of the grade, they should be taken seriously. With the rewrite option and the number of quiz grades that can be dropped (including the attendance bonus - see below), this part of the course is designed to raise your grade.

Beware, if you do not keep up with the readings, attend class and take the quizzes, the classroom grade will lower your grade.

There are four papers and fourteen quizzes. Your lowest paper grade and lowest quiz grade (one each) will be dropped. Your quiz and paper grades will be averaged for the classroom portion of your final grade.

The mid-term and the final will each be based on the material for that half of the course.

Attendance

There is no penalty for non-attendance. There is a bonus for attendance. If you miss two class, your second lowest quiz grade will be dropped. If you miss one class, your second and third lowest quiz grades will be dropped. If you miss no classes, your second, third and fourth lowest quiz grades will be dropped. This is a substantial bonus: don't miss it. **Because this is a bonus, no excuses for missing a class will be accepted.**

Class Discussion

The discussion portion of the class is important. If you have done the readings, you should have plenty to say. Don't be silent and let me do all the talking. It is so boring! This is your class. Make it interesting.

Readings

The readings have been gathered into a reader, available in the book store. A copy of the reader and the text are on reserve in the library. The readings have been selected to be readable, interesting and relevant.

Films

During the first part of every Tuesday class there will be a film relevant to that week's topic. The films will be shown with minimal explanation so that you may experience them first hand. We will develop an anthropological understanding in discussion.

Problems

If you have a problem with the material or have a personal problem during the semester, don't be silent. See me or send me an email. We can usually work something out. Don't let the effects of a problem grow. Get in touch with me right away. It only gets harder later.

Ferraro. Cultural Anthropology = (T)
All other assigned readings are in the reader = (R)

Part I - Setting the Stage

Week 1. January 16 & 18

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Chapter 1 (T)

Thursday, 1-18. Quiz #1

Week 2. January 23 & 25

Culture

Chapter 2 (T), Franklin (R) 1, Rensberger (R) 25-30

Tuesday, 1-23. Film: Advertising and the End of the World. 40 minutes. HF5822.H48

Film Note: There is much in this video that sets the stage for the course. What is culture? How does culture change? To what extent are you influenced (controlled) by your culture? Do you really have free will? What is free will? There is a quote from Gramsci at the end of the video that says (in part) what the course is about: "Pessimism of the intellect is about recognizing the reality of the present circumstance." Keep this in mind when watching the video. Recognizing the reality of the present is not about being anti-progress, unpatriotic, un-American or anything of the sort. It can be seen as exactly the opposite. In an effort to "see outside the box," we will employ pessimism of the intellect. It may be unpleasant at times, but it is much less unpleasant than the consequence of avoidance.

Tuesday, 1-23. Quiz #2

Week 3. January 30 & February 1

Human Origins

Kottak (R) 138-153, 162-177

Tuesday, 1-30. Film: Evolution and Human Equality. 42 minutes. GN281.G68

Film note: This film is a lecture by Stephen J. Gould about human (miss)uses of concepts of evolution. It bridges from the 19th century work of anthropologists like Morgan in his effort to explain human progress as a linear process and to justify colonialism to current scientific evidence about human origins and human equality. The film brings into question structures of inequality in our society and especially our everyday acceptance of inequality as normal.

Tuesday, 1-30. Quiz #3

Part II – Issues

Week 4. February 6 & 8

Making a Living: Food and Survival

Chapter 7 (T), Moore-Lappe (R) 189-193, Diamond (R) 95-98, Moore (R) 1-2

Tuesday, 2-6. Film: Journal from India: the Wheel of Karma. 52 minutes DS414.2.J68

Film note: Experience a different belief system. Note the contrast from the belief systems in last week's films. Making a living is also about what you believe living is about. Are Indians oppressed or might we be oppressed? Is it necessary that India embrace capitalism and the modern world? Is it our duty to bring Indians into modernity? Should we save them? Or perhaps, maybe they should save us? Think about Sut Jhally's message in Advertising and the End of the World. If India shifts to western concepts of "the meaning of life," might Jhally's end of the world come sooner?

Tuesday, 2-6. Quiz #4

Thursday, 2-8. Paper #1 - Race - is due.

Week 5. February 13 & 15

Marriage and the Family

Chapter 9 (T)

Tuesday 2-13. Film: sitcom videos - Ozzi and Harriet, episode 3 (Fraternity party).

22 minutes. PN1992.77.A38

- Friends, episode 2 (The one that ends with a sonogram). 30 minutes. PN1992.77.F75

Film note: Ozzie and Harriet was a radio show in the 1940s and by the 1950s, a TV show. Ozzie and Harriet and David and Ricky (their children) were a real family that performed as a sitcom family. You are probably familiar with Friends. Note the portrayals of the family. Does TV (the media) reflect culture or does it influence culture?

Tuesday 2-13. Quiz #5

Week 6. February 20 & 22

Supernatural Beliefs

Chapter 14 (T), Lotus Pond (R) 1-2

Tuesday, 2-20. Film: I Am A Sorcerer. 48 minutes.

Film note: What you are about to see is bizarre if you are not familiar with syncretic religions. Use your anthropology. Be culturally relative. View the film from the point-of-view of the participants. If you are ethnocentric, the film does not work; i.e., it remains bizarre. The choice is yours.

Tuesday, 2-20. Quiz #6

Thursday, 2-22. Paper #2 - Family - is due.

Week 7. February 27 & March 1

Sex and Gender

Chapter 11 (T), Holmes (R) 90 & 92, Mainichi (R) 1, Strahinich (R) 1, Lavelle (R) 1-2, Segura (R) 24-30, Hymowitz (R) 1-2, Woods (R) 1-3

Tuesday 2-27. Film: Killing Us Softly, II. 35 minutes. HF5822.K5

Film note: This video is about the construction of female identity. Who is doing the constructing? Why is this construction process successful? What effect does it have on women?

Tuesday 2-27. Quiz #7

Week 8. March 13 & 15

Social Stratification

Chapter 13 (T)

Tuesday, 3-13. Film: The City. 53 minutes. HT111.C556

Film note: Social stratification is most evident in the city. The first civilizations were all city based. Empire followed. One of the characteristics of civilization is social stratification. Social stratification necessarily implies inequality. When society is stratified, some enjoy more of the benefits and resources than others. The position in which you are born, your family's position in society, is a major determinant of your place in a stratified society. While you watch The City, pay attention to "what is wrong with the picture."

Tuesday, 3-13. Quiz #8

Thursday, 3-15. Midterm exam is due.

Week 9. March 20 & 22

Economic Anthropology

Chapter 8 (T), Brouwer (R) 382-391, Chang (R) 279-288, Aversa (R) 1-2, Andrews (R) 1-2, Doyle (R) 1-2, Revkin (R) 1, Kunstler (R) 1-5, Urstadt (R) 72-74, Naik (R) 1, Lester (R) 1-2, Gillam (R) 1-2

Tuesday, 3-20. Film: Surviving the Bottom Line: Running with the Bulls. 19 minutes.

Surviving the Bottom Line: Living on the Fault Line. 31 minutes.

HC106.82.S96

Film note: This video is about investor capitalism. It reflects some of the forces influencing our present economy and society. It is reasonably balanced, showing the motivations of the money movers and the effects of the new economy on middle class employees of large corporations. Pay attention. This is the world you are about to enter. What is the reference to loyalty in the video? How will you survive/excel? This film and the readings for economic anthropology illustrate some of the interests of economic anthropologists.

Tuesday, 3-20. Quiz #9

Week 10. March 27 & 29

Political Organization, Social Control and Protest

Chapter 12 (T), King (R) 52-59, Saltzman (R) 1-2, Ellement (R) 1-2, Saltzman (R) 1-2

Tuesday, 3-27. Film: The Promised Land: Take Me to Chicago, part 1. 60 minutes

F548.9.N3 W344

Film note: This film is an amazing representation of political organization, social control and protest. Think of the function of the company store (the commissary), the vagrancy law and the collusion between the growers and the police. Where is protest? The Blues, migration. Think of contemporary examples. They abound. "It ain't over."

Tuesday, 3-27. Quiz #10

Thursday, 3-29. Paper #3 - Equality? - is due.

Week 11. April 3 & 10

Migration

Hernandez (R) 1-14, Rodríguez (R) 53-63, Kronholz (R) 1-3, Porter (R) 1-2, Moreno (R) 1-3, Kronholz and Rogers (R) 1-3, Kornholz (R) 1-3

Tuesday, 4-3. Film: Black Communities after the Civil War. 18 min. E185.2.B53

Alambrista. 32 minutes. PN1997.A317.A43

Film note: The first film Black Communities After the Civil War addresses some of the push and pull factors that affected Southern Blacks' migration decisions. Alambrista looks at the experiences of an illegal immigrant from Mexico.

Tuesday, 4-3. Quiz #11

Week 12. April 12 & 17

Cultural Change

Chapter 16 (T), Bodley (R) 232-240, McCracken (R) 1-4, Wessel (R) 1-4, Adams (R) 1, French (R) 1-2, Kahn (R) 1-3

Thursday 4-12. Film: Making Sense of the Sixties: Seeds of the Sixties, pt. 1. 60 min.

HN59.M35

Film note: This amazing video is the first of six about the sixties. The seeds of the sixties were laid in the previous generation (as they always are), the post WW II era. Wow! The sixties reversed many of the values of previous generation, just as the post-war forties and the fifties generations looked away from the thirties. This video does a reasonable job of connecting cultural change to its antecedents.

Thursday 4-12. Quiz #12

Week 13. April 19 & 24

Globalization – The Big Picture

Greider (R) 11-26, Wright (R) 1-2, Donnelly (R) 1-2, Engardio (R) 1-6, Bellman (R) 1, Nemko (R) 1-2, Chao (R) 1-2, Brooke (R) 1-3, Singer (R) 1-3, Rai (R) 1-3, Yahoo (R) 1-2, Prystay (R) 1-2

Thursday, 4-19. Film: Life and Debt. 20 minutes. HC154.L54

Trading Democracy. 30 minutes. HF1756.T73

Film note: Life and Debt shows what has happened in Jamaica after independence. This is a contemporary example of the process described in the Moore Lappe article “Why Can’t the Poor Feed Themselves” (week 6). If you think global change only benefits the rich nations and hurts poor nations, consider the situation presented in Trading Democracy. Once laws and agreements are signed into effect, they are open to interpretation, often beyond the original intention. With NAFTA, we have a devastating situation in existence. Nation states have limited experience in the new global economy. Just as Jamaica found itself in a “bind,” so have the parties to the NAFTA agreement.

Thursday, 4-19. Quiz #13

Thursday, 4-24. Paper #4 - Cultural Change - is due.

Week 14. April 26 & May 1

Globalization – The Local

Fernandez-Kelly (R) 47-69, Antonio and Paula (R) 1-13, Perla (R) 1-11

Thursday, 4-26. Film: Maquila: A Tale of Two Mexicos. 55 minutes. HD9734.M42

Film note: This film about the maquiladora experience in Mexico lies within the oppression discourse that Fernandez-Kelly writes about. The situation it describes is all bad. How do you reconcile the Antonio and Paula and Perla stories with Fernandez-Kelly and the film? We will try to put these pictures in perspective in discussion.

Thursday, 4-26. Quiz #14

May 3 is course summary day.

Final Exam

Thursday, 5-10