

Syllabus

SC003 Introduction to Cultural Anthropology Fall 2007 Tuesday and Thursday 12:00 to 1:15PM 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. We will focus on what anthropology has to contribute to an understanding of the social issues of our times.

After introducing cultural anthropology and human evolution, we will focus on issues that anthropologists are currently addressing such as marriage and the family, health and healing, sex and gender, religion, political economy, political organization and social control, migration, social stratification and class and globalization.

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.

You will be required to prepare four two-page papers on assigned topics. You must write the papers within the context of the course. Do not use the dictionary or the web. 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 will be 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 thirteen 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 course pack, available in the book store. A copy of the course pack 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, sixth edition = (T)

All other assigned readings are in the course pack = (R)

Part I - Setting the Stage

Week 1. September 4 & 6

Culture

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

Tuesday, 9-4. 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 or un-American. 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.

Thursday, 9-6. Quiz #1

Week 2. September 11 & 13

Human Origins

Nanda and Warms (R) 27-54

Tuesday, 9-11. 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, 9-11. Quiz #2

Part II – Issues

Week 3. September 18 & 20

Making a Living: Food and Survival

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

Tuesday, 9-18. 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 our idea of the modern world? Is it our duty to bring Indians into modernity, to 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, 9-18. Quiz #3

Thursday, 9-20. Paper #1 – Human Origins - is due.

Week 4. September 25 & 27

Marriage and the Family

Chapter 9 (T), Halberstam (R) 509-520

Tuesday, 9-25. Film: sitcom videos - Ozzie 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 9-25. Quiz #4

Week 5. October 2 & 4

Supernatural Beliefs

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

Tuesday, 10-2. 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.

Tuesday, 10-2. Quiz #5

Week 6. October 9 & 11

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, 10-9. 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? And on men?

Tuesday 10-9. Quiz #6

Thursday 10-11. Paper #2 – Religion – is due

Week 7. October 16 & 18

Health and Healing

Miller (R) 171-196, Glass-Coffin (R) 101-109 & 127-136, Blumhagen (R) 111-116

Tuesday, 10-16. Film: Miracle Man: John of God. 49 minutes

Film note: The treatment of illness is not exclusively about biological medicine.

Spiritualism plays a role in healing and wellness.

Tuesday, 10-16. Quiz #7

Week 8. October 23 & 25

Social Stratification and Class

Chapter 13 (T), Saltzman (R) 1-2, Ellement (R) 1-2, Saltzman (R) 1-2, Kornholz (R) 1-3, Aepfel (R) 1-3

Tuesday, 10-23. Film: People Like Us. 57 minutes. HN90.S6.P46

Film note: I have excerpted about 50 minutes from a 2 hour video. We like to think that America is classless. Not so. This video shows class in a way you will recognize. The consequences it reflects are disturbing. It puts the lie to our beliefs in meritocracy.

Tuesday, 10-23. Quiz #8

Thursday, 10-25. Midterm exam is due.

Week 9. October 30 & November 1

Economic Anthropology

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

Tuesday, 10-30. 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 (blue and white collar) employees of large corporations. How will you survive/excel? This film and the readings for economic anthropology illustrate some of the interests of economic anthropologists.

Tuesday, 10-30. Quiz #9

Week 10. November 6 & 8

Political Organization, Social Control and Protest

Chapter 12 (T), King (R) 52-59

Tuesday, 11-6. 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, 11-6. Quiz #10

Thursday, 11-8. Paper #3 - Economics - is due.

Week 11. November 13 & 15

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

Tuesday, 11-13. 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, 11-13. Quiz #11

Week 12. November 27 & 29

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, Kahn (R) 1-3, Brooke (R) 1-3, Singer (R) 1-3, Rai (R) 1-3, Yahoo (R) 1-2

Thursday, 11-27. 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 5). 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, 11-27. Quiz #12

Thursday, 11-29. Paper #4 - Migration - is due.

Week 13. December 4 & 6

Globalization – The Local

Fernandez-Kelly (R) 47-69, Antonio and Paula (R) Ehrienreich (R) Ch. 1, McCracken (R) 1-4, Wessel (R) 1-4

Thursday, 12-4. 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 story with Fernandez-Kelly and the film? We will try to put these pictures in perspective in discussion.

Thursday, 12-4. Quiz #13

Final Exam

Due in my mailbox in McGuinn 426 at 5PM on Monday, December 15