

Syllabus

SC003 Introduction to Cultural Anthropology Spring 2009 Monday, Wednesday and Friday 2:00 to 2:50PM O'Neil 211

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As the price of democracy is eternal vigilance, so the cost of vital culture is its continual re-creation. People never find out who they are, or their value, by looking into someone's else's mirror, nor by accepting cultural judgments from an earlier time. Those reflections are necessary correctives. They guide people toward goals and around pitfalls. But a living culture constantly adapts the usable past to present pressures. Not the other way around. When critics measure the present only with past yardsticks, or when they fail to search widely enough for an era's authentic gestures, then it appears to them that no usable present culture exists. W. T. Lhamon Jr. in Deliberate Speed 2002

About the course

This course is an introduction to cultural anthropology. 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 move to 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, youth culture, 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 start.

At the beginning of each week, 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 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 three classes, your second lowest quiz grade will be dropped. If you miss two classes, your second and third lowest quiz grades will be dropped. If you miss one class, your second, third and fourth lowest quiz grades will be dropped. If you miss no classes, your second, third, fourth and fifth 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 is on reserve in the library. The readings have been selected to be readable, interesting and relevant.

Films

Every Friday there will be a film relevant to the next 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.

Part I - Setting the Stage

Week 1. January 14 & 16

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Friday, 1-16. Film: Advertising and the End of the World. 40 minutes. HF5822.AH48
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 negative. 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.

Week 2. January 21 & 23 (1-19 is MLK Day, no class)

Culture

Franklin 1, Rensberger 25-30, Sterk 13-20, Elst 48-54, Spradley and McCurdy 1-5
Wednesday, 1-21. Quiz #1 Culture

Friday, 1-23. Film: Evolution and Human Equality. 42 minutes. GN281.G68
Film note: This film is a lecture by Stephen J. Gould about 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.

Week 3. January 26, 28 & 30

Human Origins

Nanda and Warms 27-54

Monday, 1-26. Quiz #2 Human Origins

Wednesday, 1-28. Paper #1 – **Fieldwork** - is due.

Friday, 1-30. Film: The Women's Bank of Bangladesh. 47 minutes. HG3290.6.A8 G736
Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank won the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for leveraging small loans into major social change for impoverished families. This film shows how the process works and how micro-financing can affect how people are able to make a living.

Part II – Issues

Week 4. February 2, 4 & 6

Making a Living: Food and Survival

Moore-Lappe 185-189, Diamond 79-82, Moore 1-2, Cabaza de Vaca 91-93, 78-81

Monday, 2-2. Quiz #3 Making a Living

Friday, 2-6. 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?

Week 5. February 9, 11 & 13

Marriage and the Family

Halberstam 509-520, Kristof 114-116, Tannen 62-70

Monday, 2-9. Quiz #4 Marriage and the Family

Friday, 2-13. Film: I Am A Sorcerer. 48 minutes. (my VHS tape)

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.

Week 6. February 16, 18 & 20

Supernatural Beliefs

Lotus Pond 1-2, Plotkin 156-163

Monday, 2-16. Quiz #5 Supernatural Beliefs

Wednesday, 2-18. Paper #2 - **Marriage and the Family** - is due

Friday, 2-20. 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?

Week 7. February 23, 25 & 27

Sex and Gender

Ferraro 255-277, Holmes 90 & 92, Mainichi 1, Strahinich 1, Lavelle 1-2, Hymowitz 1-2, Woods 1-3

Monday, 2-23. Quiz #6 Sex and Gender

Friday, 2-27. Film: Miracle Man: John of God. 49 minutes. (my DVD)

Film note: The treatment of illness is not exclusively about biological medicine. Spiritualism plays a role in healing and wellness.

March 2 through 6. Spring Break

March 9 through 13. No classes

Monday, 3-16. Midterm Exam is due

Week 8. March 16, 18 & 20

Health and Healing

Miller 171-196, Glass-Coffin 101-109 & 127-136, Goulding 1-8

Monday, 3-16. Quiz #7 Health and Healing

Friday, 3-20. Film: People Like Us: Social Class in America. 57 minutes. (my DVD)

Film note: I have excerpted 57 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.

Week 9. March 23, 25 & 27

Social Stratification and Class

Saltzman 1-2, Ellement 1-2, Saltzman 1-2, Kornholz 1-3, Aeppel 1-3, Rubin 28-43

Monday, 3-23. Quiz #8 Social Stratification

Wednesday, 3-25. Paper #3 - **Health and Healing** is due.

Friday, 3-27. 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.

Week 10. March 30, April 1 & 3

Economic Anthropology

Brouwer 382-391, Andrews 1-2, Adams 1, Kunstler 1-5, Urstadt 72-74, Weatherford 154-164, Bourgeois 21-28

Monday, 3-30. Quiz #9 Economic Anthropology

Friday, 4-3. Film: selections from Style Wars (my DVD)

Week 11. April 6 & 8 (4-10 is Good Friday, no class)

Youth Culture

Hoffman 82-85, Klein 86-89, Storey 141-151, May 114-118, 209-214, Lytle 26-37, 74-76, 119-121, 136-137, 144-147, 180-181, 194-195, 198-199, 205-209

Monday, 4-6 Quiz #10 Youth Culture

Wednesday, 4-8. Paper #4 - **Social Stratification** - is due

Wednesday, 4-8. Film: selections from Blue Collar and Buddha. 28 minutes (my DVD)

selections from Alambrista. 32 minutes. (my DVD)

Film note: Blue Collar and Buddha examines the integration of an immigrant group in the U.S. Alambrista looks at the experiences of an illegal immigrant from Mexico.

Week 12. April 15 & 17 (4-13 is Easter Monday, no class)

Migration

Hernandez 1-14, Rodríguez 50-61, Kronholz 1-3, Porter 1-2, Moreno 1-3, Kronholz and Rogers 1-3

Wednesday, 4-15. Quiz #11 Migration

Friday, 4-17. 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 4). 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 enacted, 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.

Week 13. April 22 & 24 (4-20 is Patriot’s Day, no class)

Globalization – The Big Picture

Greider 11-26, Wright 1-2, Donnelly 1-2, Engardio 1-5, Bellman 1-2, Nemko 1, Chao 1-2, Kahn 1-3, Brooke 1-3, Singer 1-3, Rai 1-3, Yahoo 1-2

Wednesday, 4-22. Quiz #13 Globalization - The Big Picture

Friday, 4-24. Film: Maquila: A Tale of Two Mexicos. 55 minutes. HD9734.M42

Film note: This film about the maquiladora experience in Mexico lies within an oppression discourse. The situation it describes is all bad. How do you reconcile the Antonio and Paula story with the film? We will try to put these contradictory views in perspective.

Week 14. 4-27 & 29 (4-29 is the last day of classes)

Globalization – The Local

Hamm 1-13, Ehrenreich 11-49, McCracken 1-4, Wessel 1-4

Monday, 4-27. Quiz #14 Globalization - The Local

Final Exam

Due in my mailbox in McGuinn 426 at 5PM on Monday, May 11