

Syllabus

SC003 Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Fall 2009

Monday, Wednesday and Friday 2:00 to 2:50PM

O'Neil 211

Professor: Jim Hamm

Office: McGuinn 426D

Office hours: Monday and Wednesday by appointment

email: hammj@bc.edu

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, political economy, youth culture, migration, social stratification, global warming, the rise of the East and globalization. Anthropologists are interested in the effects of what goes on around us on people.

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. 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 unit, 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.**

If you have more than nine (9) unexcused absences, you will receive an F.

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

At the beginning of each unit there will be a film relevant to the unit'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

September 9

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Unit 1. September 11, 14 & 16

Culture

Franklin 1, Rensberger 25-30, Sterk 13-20, Elst 48-54, Spradley and McCurdy 1-5

Friday, 9-11. Film: selections from Advertising and the End of the World. 34 minutes.
(my DVD)

selections from The Overspent American. 15 minutes. (my DVD)

Film Note: There is much in these videos that set the stage for the course. What is culture? How does culture change? To what extent is the way you think and act influenced (controlled) by your culture? Do you have free will?

Monday, 9-14. Quiz #1 Culture

Unit 2. September 18, 21 & 23

Human Origins

Nanda and Warms 27-54, Williams 1-6

Friday, 9-18. Film: Evolution and Human Equality. 42 minutes. (my DVD)

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 William Henry 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.

Monday, 9-21. Quiz #2 Human Origins

Part II – Issues

Unit 3. September 25, 28 & 30

Making a Living: Food and Survival

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

Friday, 9-25. 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.

Monday, 9-28. Quiz #3 Making a Living

Wednesday, 9-30. Paper #1 –Human Origins – is due

Unit 4. October 2, 5 & 7

Marriage and the Family

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

Friday, 10-2. 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, Harriet, 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?

Monday, 10-5. Quiz #4 Marriage and the Family

Unit 5. October 9 & 14

Health & Healing

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

Friday, 10-9. Film: Miracle Man: John of God. 50 minutes. BF1275.F3 M57

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

Wednesday, 10-14. Quiz #5 Health and Healing

Unit 6. October 16, 19 & 21

Sex and Gender

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

Friday, 10-16. Film: Killing Us Softly, III. 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?

Monday, 10-19. Quiz #6 Sex and Gender

Wednesday, 10-21. Paper #2 – Health and Healing – is due

Unit 7. October 23, 26 & 28

Social Stratification and Class

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

Friday, 10-23. Film: selections from 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.

Monday, 10-26. Quiz #7 Social Stratification

Wednesday, November 4 Midterm Exam due in class.

Unit 8. October 30 & November 2 & 4

Economic Anthropology

Brouwer 382-391, Andrews 1-2, Adams 1, Kunstler 1-5, Urstadt 72-74, Bourgois 21-28

Friday, 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.

Monday, 11-2. Quiz #8 Economic Anthropology

Unit 9. November 6 & 9

Youth Culture

Hoffman 82-85, Storey 141-151, May 209-214, Lytle 194-195, 198-199, 205-207, Schloss 1-3, Chang 118-125

Friday, 11-6. Film: selections from Style Wars (my DVD)

Film note: Youth culture covers an enormous range of activity. I have chosen the Hip Hop movement. This film looks mostly at graffiti and the motivations behind it. What started out as writing names on walls is evolving into an art form. We are interested in the Hip Hop movement's effect on people - practitioners and viewers.

Monday, 11-9 Quiz #9 Youth Culture

Monday, 11-9. Paper #3 – Economic anthropology - is due

Unit 10. November 11 & 13

Migration

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

Wednesday, 11-11. 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.

Friday, 11-13. Quiz #10 Migration

Unit 11. November 16 & 18

Homelessness

Gonzales 1, Hurt 1, Duffield 195-199, Ralston 1-3, Amster 7-15

Monday, 11-16. Film: selections from It Was A Wonderful Life. 47 minutes (my DVD)

Film Note: Middle and upper class women talk about their slide into homelessness, how they are getting along and their hopes for the future. It happened to them. Could it happen to any of us? We learn that homelessness is about much more than alcohol, drugs and mental retardation.

Wednesday, 11-18. Quiz # 11 Homelessness

Unit 12. November 20 & 23

The Rise of the East

Art 260-265, Kahn 1-3, Brooke 1-3, Rai 1-3, Yahoo 1-2, Romero 1-2

Friday, 11-20. Film: Selections from Boston Legal, season 5, disc 4, episode 12. 14 minutes
(my DVD)

Monday, 11-23. Quiz # 12 Rise of the East

Unit 13. November 30 & December 2 & 4

Global Warming

Rosenthal 1-3, Roach 1-2, EPA – Future Temperature Change 1-5, EPA – Future Sea Level change 1-2, Barclay 1-2, Xinhua 1-2, Revkin 1-3

Monday 11-30. Film: Too Hot To Handle. 54 minutes. QC981.8.G56 T66

Film note: Too Hot To Handle presents global warming as a natural phenomenon and a human enhanced event. The focus is on the implications of global warming for the U.S.

Wednesday, 12-2. Quiz # 13 Global Warming

Friday, December 4. Paper #4 – Rise of the East – is due

Unit 14. December 7, 9 & 11

Globalization

Greider 11-26, Wright 1-2, Donnelly 1-2, Engardio 1-5, Bellman 1-2, Nemko 1, Chao 1-2, Singer 1-3, Ehrenreich 11-49, McCracken 1-4, Wessel 1-4

Monday, 12-7. Film: Life and Debt. 20 minutes. HC154.L54

Trading Democracy. 30 minutes. HF1746.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.

Wednesday. 12-9. Quiz #14 Globalization

Final Exam

Due in my mailbox in McGuinn 426 by 5PM on Friday, December 18