Introduction to Anthropology

ANT 201
Spring 2004
Carl Icahn Laboratory 101
M-W 11:00-11:50 AM

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Office: 205 Aaron Burr Hall
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Office Hours: Tuesday 3:00-5:00 PM
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Course Description:

Anthropology is a comparative study of culture, society, and human difference. The field challenges us to consider the many ways in which people’s lives are shaped by social relations, cultural images, and historical forces. Based on ethnographic accounts and documentary films, the course will introduce the student to the primary domains of social and cultural anthropology: kinship and social organization; religion, belief and rituals; gender and sexuality; variations in family life and parenting and in individual identity-making; deviancy and social control; economic and social exchanges; colonialism and political violence; sickness and healing; rational-technical interventions and social suffering; global developments and transformations in local worlds; shifting concepts of human rights and citizenship. The course will familiarize students with ethnographic fieldwork methods and will question the universality of cultural categories and the range of variation among human societies. The course will also introduce students to some of the key historical figures in 20th century anthropology and to the development of key concepts, theoretical approaches, and to major dilemmas in the field, past and present, as it seeks to understand, interpret, and represent the lived world of people abroad and at home.

Requirements/Grading:

The success of the course depends on your commitment to complete all required readings for each class and precept meeting, to critically reflect on the readings, to participate actively in class and precept discussions, and to creatively integrate these insights in the written assignments (one short paper and two take home exams).

Class and Precept Participation: 15%
Short Paper (due on March 1):  20%
Take Home Midterm Exam 25%
Take Home Final Exam 40%
Course Materials

Assigned articles and book chapters can be downloaded from Firestone Library’s electronic reserve. The following books will be available for purchase at the U-Store, and are on reserve at Firestone Library:


Week One
February 2 and 4

What is Anthropology?


Williams, Raymond. “Anthropology,” and “Culture.” Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983, pp. 38-40, 87-93,

Film: Bronislaw Malinowski: Off the Veranda

Week Two
February 9 and 10

Culture Matters and the Native’s Point of View


Week Three
February 16 and 18

The Ethnography of a Life History


Film: Nlai, the story of a !Kung Woman

Week Four
February 23 and 25

Social Body, Ritual, and Identity


Film: Guardians of the Flutes by Paul Reddish (BBC, 1994).
Week Five
March 1 and 3

Kinship


Film: Margaret Mead (produced by NBC)

First Assignment is due on March 1:
A short paper (no more than 4 double-spaced pages) discussing the concept of “cultural relativism” in light of a contemporary issue related to religion, kinship, or sexuality.

Week Six
March 8 and 10

People’s History and The Limits of Ethnographic Representation


Spring Break
Week Seven
March 22 and 24

The Sense of Inequality


Film: *The Invention of Childhood* by Liliana Sulzbach (2000).

Week Eight
March 29 and 31

Where is Anthropology Today?


Week Nine
April 5 and 7

Globalization and Cultural Citizenship


Week Ten
April 12 and 14

Social Suffering


Week Eleven
April 19 and 22

Memory, Violence, and Place


Week Twelve

The Future of Anthropology


An Introduction to Anthropology documents human life through Biological Anthropology, Archaeology, and Cultural Anthropology. An Introduction to Anthropology is also about understanding the ways in which we can use anthropology to think about future possibilities. For some examples see: Sex, Gender, Sexuality as Social Constructions. This post is one of the most viewed on the site, perhaps because people are eager to hear an anthropological perspective on these issues.