

SOAN 110: Introduction to Social Anthropology Fall 2014

Carleton College
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Professor Jerome Levi
Office: Leighton 227 Tel: 222-4110
Hours: Tue and Thu 1-2 pm, or by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

As a general introduction to social and cultural anthropology, this course is centrally concerned with the problems and prospects involved in the social scientific study of other cultures. It aims to expose the student to the basic theoretical principles of the discipline through a critical reading of ethnographic cases representing cultures of Oceania, Africa, Asia, North and South America. We start by examining the major subfields of anthropology, fieldwork and the ethnographic method, and anthropological concepts of culture, language, and ecology. Emphasizing the significance of exchange in social relations, we next examine structural-functional approaches to the cross-cultural study of economic, political, kinship, and religious institutions. Then we investigate how status, gender, and ethnicity frame the expression of social roles and inequality. The last part of the course explores the recent topics and controversies in anthropology. We conclude with a discussion of why an anthropological perspective will be increasingly relevant for the 21st century.

One of the fundamental goals of this course is to heighten awareness among students regarding the methodological and existential difficulties implicit in the systematic study of cultures. We discuss the extent to which it may or may not be possible to frame value-free hypotheses, examine culture and/or gender-bound bias in ethnographic writing, and analyze the relative strengths and weaknesses of various approaches. We also debate what "outsiders" are apt to miss in the analysis of other cultures and what "insiders" may not recognize in the analysis of their own, in addition to those aspects of culture that each perspective may be more likely to detect.

It is the aim of this course to facilitate intercultural dialogue in several ways. First, the diversity of backgrounds among both students and authors sets the stage for various perspectives to be represented in classroom discussions, and alternate interpretations of ethnographic narratives are actively solicited to encourage critical thinking. Second, the readings for most weeks have been explicitly structured such that articles describing beliefs and practices of foreign cultures are purposefully juxtaposed to readings describing comparable customs among people in the United States. Thus, by "familiarizing the exotic" and "exoticizing the familiar," students are sensitized to issues of cultural difference and similarity. In this way, the course endeavors to stimulate intercultural understanding by creating a learning situation in which students can view their own culture as well as that of others from new vantage points.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

You must read all required readings, whether they are in your textbooks, on the World Wide Web, or on reserve in the library. Recommended readings are optional. The student's grade for this course is based upon a midterm (25%), a final exam (35%), and a library assignment, the latter being about 10 pages in length (40%). Daily attendance and participation in class discussions are required and will be used in determining grades for borderline cases.

Note: If you have any special needs which may affect your performance in this class, and which you feel I should know about, I encourage you to speak with me early in the term.

Exams

Both exams are intended to show not only that one has attended the lectures and completed the readings but, more importantly, to demonstrate how well one has understood them. Exceptional performances will be indicated by how well students are able to reformulate familiar materials in new ways. The midterm will cover topics discussed during the first part of the term. The final exam will be comprehensive but will focus on the second half of the course.

Class Participation

Daily class attendance is expected; *dates when papers are due are no exception*. Students are also expected to enter into the discussion of course topics, both when we break into our smaller discussion groups as well as when we come together as a class. The amount one speaks, however, is less important than the quality of things which are said. At the same time, please don't feel that pearls of wisdom are expected to come from your mouth every time you open it. Literally, the dumbest question is the one left unasked. Often times many people are wondering the same thing. In short, I strive to generate an atmosphere in which you feel free to think creatively, hash out ideas, and challenge -- each other as well as me.

Library Assignment

This assignment is designed for students to demonstrate more formal writing and thinking skills outside of examination settings. The library exercise aims to familiarize students with the new information retrieval systems and proper citation methods, particularly as they relate to anthropological sources. The paper will be graded on content as well as mechanics (grammar, spelling, proof reading, etc). It is now departmental policy that each day a paper is late it will be marked down one grade.

*The following reading, on reserve at the library, is *strongly recommended* to assist you with the critical thinking required for these assignments in particular, and the course in general:

Carl Sagan, "The Fine Art of Baloney Detection." In *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*. Ch. 12, Pp. 201-218. New York: Random House. 1995

Required Texts

The following books, available at the Bookstore, are required for this course:

1. James Spradley and David McCurdy, *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2011, 14th Edition.
2. Richard Lee, *The Dobe Jul'hoansi*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2013.
3. Philippe Bourgois and Jeff Schonberg, *Righteous Dopefiend*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

4. Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996.
5. Spencer Wells, *The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey*. New York: Random House, 2003.

The Scope of Anthropology

Tues 9/16 Course Introduction

Thurs 9/18 Anthropological Subfields

Meet in LIBE 306 for library orientation on finding anthropological resources

On the World Wide Web: go to the *American Anthropological Association Homepage*, at <http://www.aaanet.org/> and explore.

In *Conformity and Conflict*:
Spradley and McCurdy, "Culture and Ethnography"

In *Dobe Ju/'honsi*: Ch. 1 "The Ju/'hoansi" and Ch. 2 "The People of the Dobe Area"

In *Righteous Dopefiend*: "Introduction: A Theory of Abuse" and Ch. 1 "Intimate Apartheid," Ch. 2 "Falling in Love."

Tues 9/23 "Doing Ethnography" -- Fieldwork and the Culture Concept

In *Conformity and Conflict*:
Laura Bohannan, "Shakespeare in the Bush"
Richard Lee, "Eating Christmas in the Kalahari"
(Also in *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*, Appendix A)

On Reserve at the Library:
Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In: *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Ch. 1, Pp. 3-30.

Language, Race, and Culture

Thurs 9/25 Language and Culture

In *Conformity and Conflict*:
"Language and Communication"
Sarah Boxer, "Manipulating Meaning: The Military Name Game"
Deborah Tannen, "Conversation Style: Talking on the Job"

On Reserve:
Jared Diamond, "Losing Languages: Speaking with a Single Tongue"

Watch excellent 20 minute video on language extinction by K. David Harrison:

<http://www.poptech.org/lldd>

Begin reading Wells, *The Journey of Man*, Ch. 1-3, Pp. 1-60.

Tues 9/30 Boasian Perspectives

Film: "Franz Boas: 1852-1942"

On Reserve:

Franz Boas, "Living Philosophies II, An Anthropologist's Credo," *The Nation*. August 1938.

Wells, *The Journey of Man*, Ch. 4-6, Pp. 61-121

Thurs 10/2 Exploring the Four Field Approach

Wells, *The Journey of Man*, Ch. 7-9, Pp. 122-196.

Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, Ch. 1-2, Pp. 3-70. Pp. 71-152.

Journey of Man film on the web <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OV6A8oGtPc4>
(We'll watch the first part in class, the second part you should watch on your own)

Tues 10/7 Sociolinguistics and Ethnolinguistics

In *Conformity and Conflict*:

Guy Deutscher, "Whorf Revisted: You Are What You Speak"

Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, Ch. 3-4

Ruth Almstedt, "Diegueño Tree: An Ecological Approach to a Linguistic Problem." *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 34 (1): 9-15, 1968.

Environment and Adaptation

Thurs 10/9 Race, Culture, and Environment

In *Conformity and Conflict*:

"Ecology and Subsistence"

Richard Reed, "Forest Development the Indian Way"

Jared Diamond, "Domestication and the Evolution of Disease"

On the Social Construction of Race:

Jeffrey Fish, "Mixed Blood" (Chapter 24)

On Reserve:

Joseph Graves, "The Biological Case Against Race." *American Outlook*, Spring 2002

Sharon Begley, "Three is Not Enough." *Newsweek*, Feb. 13, 1995

On the World Wide Web:

Go to "About RACE: Are We So Different" on the AAA website, and watch the video clip at the bottom of the page:

<http://www.aaanet.org/resources/A-Public-Education-Program.cfm>

On the same page, click on the "RACE: Are We So Different" icon. Or go to <http://www.understandingrace.org/home.html>. Then examine race through the three lenses of History, Human Variation, and Lived Experience.

Tues 10/14 Environment and Subsistence Patterns

In *Righteous Dopefiend*: Ch. 3 “A Community of Addicted Bodies.”

In *The Dobe Ju/’hoansi*: Ch. 3 “Environment and Settlement” and Ch. 4 “Subsistence: Foraging for a Living” (or, if really pressed for time, “The Hunters: Scarce Resources in the Kalahari,” in *Conformity and Conflict*)

Rarámuri Subsistence Patterns (slides)

Social Relations as Exchange: Economics, Politics, and Kinship

Thurs 10/16 Social Relations as Exchange

Library Exercise/Research Paper Due

Film: "Kawelka, Onka's Big Moka"

In *Conformity and Conflict*:
"Economic Systems"

Lee Cronk, "Reciprocity and the Power of Giving"

Sonia Patten, “Malawi Versus the World Bank”

Jerome Levi, “Commoditizing the Vessels of Identity: Transnational Trade and the Reconstruction of Rarámuri Ethnicity.” *Museum Anthropology* 16 (3): 7-24, 1992.

In *Righteous Dopefiend*: Ch. 4 “Childhoods,” Ch. 5 “Making Money.”

On Reserve: Jack Weatherford, “Kinship and Power on Capitol Hill”

Tues 10/21 MIDTERM

Thurs 10/23 The Politics of Kinship and Marriage

In *Conformity and Conflict*:
"Kinship and Family"

David McCurdy, "Family and Kinship in Village India"

Melvyn Goldstein, “Polyandry: When Brothers Take a Wife”

Margery Wolf, “Uterine Families and the Women’s Community”

In *Righteous Dopefiend*: Ch. 6 “Parenting,” Ch. 7 “Male Love.”

Tues 10/28 Continuation of the Politics of Kinship and Marriage

Kinship Tutorial <http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/anthropology/tutor/>

In *The Dobe Ju/’hoansi*: Ch. 5 “Kinship and Social Organization,” Ch. 6 “Marriage and Sexuality,” and Ch. 8 “Conflict, Politics, and Exchange”

In *Conformity and Conflict*:
"Law and Politics"

Marvin Harris, “Life Without Chiefs”

On Reserve:

Marshall Sahlins, “The Segmentary Lineage: An Organization of Predatory Expansion.”

American Anthropologist 63: 322-345.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

Thurs 10/30 Functions of Magic and Ritual

In Conformity and Conflict:

"Religion, Magic, and Worldview"

George Gmelch, "Baseball Magic"

Stanley and Ruth Freed, "Taraka's Ghost"

Horace Miner, "Body Ritual among the Nacirema"

Tues 11/4 Continuation/Tarahumara Ritual (slides)

Kalman Applbbaum and Jerome Levi, "Fluid Signs of Commodity Fetishism: The Cosmology of Coca-Cola and Tesguino"

In *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*: Ch. 9 "Coping with Life: Religion, World View, and Healing"

Roles and Inequality

Thurs 11/6 Introduction to Status, Role, and Inequality

In Conformity and Conflict:

"Identity, Roles, and Groups"

In *Righteous Dopefiend*: Ch. 8 "Everyday Addicts," Ch. 9 "Treatment."

Tues 11/11 Power, Gender, and Ethnicity

In Conformity and Conflict:

"Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?"

In *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*: Ch. 7 "Complaint Discourse-Aging and Caregiving among the Ju/'hoansi" and Ch. 10 "The Ju/'hoansi and their Neighbors"

On Reserve:

Ernestine Friedl, "Society and Sex Roles"

Anthropology for the Twenty-first Century

Thurs 11/13 The Dobe Ju/'hoansi in a New Light

Film: "*Kalahari Family*"

In *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*: Ch. 11 "Perceptions and Directions of Social Change," Ch. 12 "The Ju/'hoansi Today," and Ch. 13 "Anthropological Practice and Lessons of the Ju/'hoansi."

Powerpoint: "The Four Rs of the Global Indigenous Movement among the San Bushman"

Tues 11/18 Conclusion

In Conformity and Conflict:

Theodore Bestor, "How Sushi Went Global"

David McCurdy, "Using Anthropology"

In *Righteous Dopefiend*: "Conclusion: Critically Applied Public Anthropology."