SOAN 110: Introduction to Social Anthropology
Winter 2019

Carleton College
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

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Class: T/Th Leighton 305
Office: Weitz 239A
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Hours: Tue and Thu 3:10-4:10 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 self-scheduled final exam (35%), and a library assignment, the latter being about 10 pages in length (35%). Daily attendance
and participation in class discussions are required and will also be factored into your final grade (5%).

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:


Required Texts

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


Required readings for the course not in the textbooks will be placed on Closed Reserve in the Library and on the Moodle page for this course.

**The Scope of Anthropology**

**Tue 1/8** Course Introduction

**Thu 1/10** Anthropological Subfields


In *Conformity and Conflict:*
“Culture and Ethnography” pp. 2-5
James Spradley, “Ethnography and Culture” pp. 6-12

In *Dobe Ju/'honsi*: Ch. 1-2, pp. 1-23

**Tue 1/15** “Doing Ethnography” -- Fieldwork and the Culture Concept

In *Conformity and Conflict:*
Laura Bohannan, “Shakespeare in the Bush” pp. 41-48
(Also in *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*, Appendix A, pp. 207-212)

On Reserve/Moodle:

**Anthropology’s Four Subfields: An Overview**

**Thu 1/17** Language and Culture

In *Conformity and Conflict:*
“Language and Communication” pp. 38-40
Deborah Tannen, “Conversation Style: Talking on the Job” 53-59

On Reserve/Moodle:
Jared Diamond, “Losing Languages: Speaking with a Single Tongue”

TEDx talk by Peter Hill, former Carleton student and founder and director of the Lakota Language Immersion Day Care Program: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZD0vBAUx-g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZD0vBAUx-g)

Tue 1/22  Boasian Perspectives on Language, Race, and Culture

Film (in class):  *Franz Boas: 1852-1942*

On Moodle/Reserve:

Continue reading Wrangham, *Catching Fire*, Ch. 4-6, pp. 83-146

Thu 1/24  Solving Scientific Puzzles Using the Four-Field Approach: Integrating archaeology, linguistics, biological and cultural anthropology


Film (in class): *Did Cooking Make Us Human?*
http://www.veoh.com/watch/v106281809ZD4mrczP

Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, Ch. 1-2, pp. 3-70 (for discussion next class meeting)

Tue 1/29  Sociolinguistics and Ethnolinguistics

On Reserve/Moodle:
David S. Thompson, “The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis: Worlds Shapes by Words”

Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, Ch. 3-4, pp. 71-152

**Environment and Adaptation**

Thu 1/31  Environment and Subsistence Patterns

In *Conformity and Conflict*:
“Ecology and Subsistence” pp. 62-64
Richard Lee, “The Hunters: Scarce Resources in the Kalahari” pp. 65-78
Susan Crate, “We are Going Underwater” pp. 88-95

In *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*: Skim Ch. 3-4 pp. pp. 23-58

On Reserve/Moodle:

Tue 2/5  Race, Culture, and Environment

On the Social Construction of Race:
In *Conformity and Conflict*:
Jeffrey Fish, “Mixed Blood” pp. 200-208

On Moodle/Reserve:
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. Then go to http://www.understandingrace.org/ and examine race through the three lenses of History, Human Variation, and Lived Experience.

Social Relations as Exchange: Economics, Politics, and Kinship

Thu 2/7  Social Relations as Exchange

Library Exercise/Research Paper Due

Film (in class): The Kawelka: Ongka’s Big Moka

In Conformity and Conflict:
“Economic Systems” pp. 108-110
Lee Cronk, “Reciprocity and the Power of Giving” pp. 111-116
Jessica Smith Rolston, “Women in the Mine” pp. 128-135

On Reserve/Moodle

Tue 2/12  MIDTERM

Thu 2/14  The Politics of Kinship and Marriage

In Conformity and Conflict:
“Kinship and Family” pp. 142-144
David McCurdy, “Family and Kinship in Village India” pp. 155-162
Melvyn Goldstein, “Polyandry: When Brothers Take a Wife” pp. 163-169

Kinship Tutorial http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/anthropology/tutor/
Read under Topics “Kin Fundamentals” and “Kinship Terminology

Tue 2/19  Continuation of Kinship, Marriage, and Politics

In The Dobe Ju/'hoansi: Skim Ch. 5-6 pp. 59-90 & Ch. 8, 109-124

In Conformity and Conflict:
“Law and Politics” pp. 216-217

James Spradley and David McCurdy, “Law and Order” pp. 226-236

On Reserve/Moodle:

Religious Beliefs and Practices
Thu 2/21  Functions of Magic and Ritual

In *Conformity and Conflict*:
“Religion, Magic, and Worldview” pp. 254-256
George Gmelch, “Baseball Magic” pp. 266-274
Horace Miner, “Body Ritual among the Nacirema” pp. 287-291

In *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*: Ch. 9 pp. 125-140

Tue 2/26  Desert Interlude: Reflections on Yuman Religion and Worldview

Film (in class): *Journey from Spirit Mountain*

On Reserve/Moodle:

Roles and Inequality

Thu 2/28  Introduction to Status, Role, and Inequality

In *Conformity and Conflict*:
“Identity, Roles, and Groups” pp. 177-180
Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar, “Becoming Muslim in Europe” pp. 192-199

On Reserve/Moodle:

Tue 3/5  Power, Gender, Age, and Ethnicity

In *Conformity and Conflict*:

In *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*: Ch. 7 pp. 91-108 and Ch. 10 pp. 141-150

On Reserve/Moodle:
Ernestine Friedl, "Society and Sex Roles"

Anthropology for the Twenty-first Century

Thu 3/7  Globalization

In *Conformity and Conflict*:
“Globalization” pp. 294-296

Film (in class): *Kalahari Family* or *N!ai: The Story of a !Kung Woman*

In *The Dobe Ju/'hoansi*: Skim Ch. 11-13 pp. 141-200
PowerPoint (in class): “The Four Rs of the Global Indigenous Movement among the San Bushman”

**Tue 3/12  Conclusion**

In *Conformity and Conflict:*
“Using and Doing Anthropology” pp. 336-339
David McCurdy, “Using Anthropology” pp. 377-384
Rachael Stryker, “Public Interest Ethnography: Women’s Prison’s and Health Care in California” pp. 361-372