Course Description and Objectives

This course introduces core concepts, theories, and methods in Cultural Anthropology, one of the four branches of the discipline of anthropology that examines human societies and cultures in their variation and diversity. In this course, we will take a close look at the discipline’s history and some of the important intellectual interventions that continue to define the discipline to this day. These conversations will pivot around a constellation of guiding questions: How do we understand human beings as both biological and social organisms? What tools can we use to explain and understand human cultural diversity? Where does social inequality come from and through what mechanisms is it sustained? How do societies adapt to as well as transform their natural environment? And what can individual case studies tell us about broader social and political structures and their relevance to the human condition?

We will be reading a selection of key texts which will introduce you to a range of conversations in which anthropologists continue to engage. These texts will help us explore some of the key definitions, debates, and theories that structure the discipline. Readings are essential and required unless otherwise indicated. In class, we will discuss and expand on readings, focusing on key case studies and the ways that they illustrate crucial anthropological concepts. These include, but are not limited to, kinship, economy, political organization, environment, race, social inequality, and religion.

The overall aim in this course is for students to emerge with an understanding of cultural anthropology, its position within the broader field of anthropology, and its contributions to social theory.

Course Organization

This course meets weekdays, from 1pm to 2:45pm. Its small size allows room for an interactive classroom environment, so please come to class ready to discuss the readings and ask questions.

This is a reading-intensive course. Most of the texts we will read can be considered core texts in anthropology. Many of them serve as important milestones in the advancement of anthropological theory. Almost all have made valuable contributions to public discourse. Some are chapters and others are articles published in academic journals. While some of these texts are dated, and may be challenging to read, given their importance for the discipline and relevance, you are asked to come to class having read them and having prepared questions regarding sections that were unclear. Given the restraints of a five-week course, I am doing my best to keep the reading load at a reasonable level. Additional readings beyond the textbook are, in general, shorter and more focused. However, for longer pieces I will mention in advance the parts that I would like you to focus on. In general, I recommend that readings from the course textbook be
completed over the weekend and can thereby help structure our engagements with more primary sources throughout the week.

I will begin each class by providing an overview of the concepts presented in the reading, expanding on key points and presenting case studies. This will be a “lecture” format, but I ask everyone to feel at ease interrupting to ask questions. We will then take a break, and then dive into discussion. There may be more or less time for discussion depending on the day, but in general, lectures will be more heavily weighted towards the beginning of the week and discussion more heavily weighted towards the end of the week. Discussions will often center around your reading responses, or key questions that have been brought up in class.

**Course Materials**

There is one required textbook for this course. The textbook, which can be purchased at the Campus Bookstore, will be on reserve at Olin Library. Additional readings will be posted on Canvas.

**Textbook:**


**Exams and Grading**

All required course material is considered fair game for evaluation, although exams will be weighted more heavily towards subjects that we discuss in class. Grading will be based on the following.

**20 points – 2 assignments (10x2):** You will be asked to complete two take-home assignments based on our readings and discussions. These assignments will be given at the beginning of Weeks 2 and 4 and will be due at the end of Weeks 2 and 4. They are meant to be enjoyable and shouldn’t take more than 2-3 hours outside of class. But they will require that you have kept up with the readings and are prepared to apply some of the concepts/methods we discuss.

**60 points – 2 exams (mid-term, 25 points; Final, 35 points):** Exams will include a mix of multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short essay questions. The shorter mid-term will take approximately an hour. The longer, and cumulative final will take the full class time. I will post a review guide one week before each exam and hold an informal 60-minute review session the evening before each exam. The location and time will be announced in class.

**15 points – Five reading responses (5x3):** At some point, any point, during each week (between Sunday evening and Friday before class) you will be required to write one or two paragraphs discussing at least two of the readings for that week and submit these before class on Canvas. You can raise points you thought were interesting, ask questions on things you don’t understand. Although your responses will only be available to me, I may bring up the points you raise in class and ask you to expand on them. This is not meant to be a stressful assignment, but rather to
help me guide discussion and touch on points that maybe don’t seem so clear. Again, you can submit any day of the week. However, the only caveat is that you cannot submit on the same day of the week twice during the semester! (For example, if you submit on a Friday one week, you have to submit on a Mon, Tues, Weds, Thurs the next week).

5 points – Participation: Your participation will go miles towards making the class more enjoyable for all of us. Please be prepared to come to class ready to engage to the best of your abilities. And don’t be afraid to ask questions!

For students who are taking this class as PASS/FAIL, a minimum score of 70 is required to PASS.

No extra credit options will be provided.

Absence Policy

No more than two absences are permitted. Each additional undocumented absence will result in a 5-point reduction from your final grade.

No make-ups will be given for undocumented absences.

Disability Resources

Students who require accommodations should contact Disabilities Resources at Cornerstone (http://cornerstone.wustl.edu/disability-resources/) and obtain the VISA form. Please notify me as soon as possible of the necessary accommodations.

Office Hours

If you need to reach me outside of class hours to discuss the course materials, please send me an email.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to adhere to standards of academic integrity listed on the Academic Integrity Policy website (https://wustl.edu/about/compliance-policies/academic-policies/undergraduate-student-academic-integrity-policy/). It is incredibly challenging to cut corners in a small discussion-based course in which evaluation will be based on the ability of students to absorb a holistic understanding of cultural anthropology as a field of intellectual inquiry. Your time will be much better spent reading the course material and participating in discussions in class.

Week 1: Cultural Anthropology and the Ethnographic Method

Mon (6/10) Introduction to Anthropology; Welsch and Vivanco (Chs. 1 & 2)
Tues Ethnology and Evolutionism; McGhee and Warm (Roots of Anthropology), Boas
Week 2: Symbols, Religion, and Kinship

Mon Language, Meaning, and Interpretation; Welsch and Vivanco (Chs. 3, 10 & 11)
Tues Symbols, Norms, and Institutions; Ortner (Key Symbols), Wolf (Guadalupe)
Wed Kinship and Marriage; Radcliffe-Brown (Joking Relationships), Childs (The Merits of Matrimony)
Thu Ritual and Religious Practice; Bowen (Transatlantic Religions), Gmelch (Baseball)
Fri Religion and Social Structure; Evans-Pritchard (Zande Witchcraft) ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE

Week 3: Politics, Economy, and the Environment

Mon Modes of Subsistence; Welsch and Vivanco (Chs. 6 & 7); Stone (Extensive Agriculture)
Tues Economics and Exchange; Lee (Eating Christmas), Sahlins (Original Affluent Society)
Wed (6/26) EXAM 1
Thu Political Systems; Harris (Life Without Chiefs), Fried (Political Society), Welsch and Vivanco (Ch. 8 [pgs. 143-153])
Fri Capitalism and Markets; Graeber (podcast), Polanyi (Fictitious Commodities)

Week 4: Race, Gender, Sexuality

Mon Biology and Determinism; Welsch and Vivanco (Ch. 8 [pgs 153-164] & Ch. 9)
Tues Race and Racism; Fields & Fields (Racecraft), RACE Website (www.understandingrace.org)
Wed Gender and Sexuality; Mead (Sex and Temperament), Landes (Sexuality and Candomblé), Lang (Two-Spirits)
Thu (7/4) NO CLASS, INDEPENDENCE DAY
Fri Health and Illness; Welsch and Vivanco (Ch. 12), Farmer (Structural Violence) ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE

Week 5: Globalizations

Mon Globalization and the World System; Welsch and Vivanco (Ch. 5)
Tues Developmentalism and Global Food Regimes (TBD)
Wed Migration, Finance, and Flows; Wolf (Labor on the Move), Thomas (Brand Piracy)
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<tr>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>Neoliberalism; Harvey (Neoliberalism as Political Project), Wacquant (Punitive Regulation)</td>
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<td>Fri (7/12)</td>
<td>EXAM 2/FINAL</td>
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