Introduction to Anthropology

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

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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?


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 cultural anthropology will introduce students to the history, methods, and theories of the discipline, while primary attention will be given to the concept of culture as an analytical tool and to the research methods of ethnographic fieldwork. Drawing on material from all parts of the world, we will examine a variety of topics including: culture; kinship and social organization; beliefs and values; economic and political change; language; sickness and healing; resistance and social change. An introduction to the academic discipline of cultural anthropology, the study of people and cultures around the world. Cultural anthropologists use anthropological theories and methods to study culture. They study a wide variety of topics, including identity, religion, kinship, art, race, gender, class, immigration, diaspora, sexuality, globalization, social movements, and many more.