

**Anthropology 104**

## **Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology**

**Fall 2008**

**Mondays and Thursdays 11:10-12:20**

**JAC-454**

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**Office hours: Tuesdays 11:00-12:30 or by appointment**

*“Anthropology is often considered a collection of curious facts, telling about the peculiar appearance of exotic people and describing their strange customs and beliefs. It is looked upon as an entertaining diversion, apparently without any bearing upon the conduct of life of civilized communities. This opinion is mistaken. More than that, I hope to demonstrate that a clear understanding the principles of anthropology illuminates the social processes of our own times and may show us, if we are ready to listen to its teachings, what to do and what to avoid.”*

Franz Boaz, Anthropology and Modern Life, 1928

### **Course Description:**

This course introduces students to the central topics, concepts and methods of socio-cultural anthropology, which can be broadly defined as the study of human cultures and societies. This course will also provide students with knowledge and an understanding of the diversity of human cultures in the world. Readings, films and lectures are selected to address the complex and variant forces underlying human interaction and social life, and how they are revealed through the eyes of different anthropologists.

The class will begin by confronting the question of social and cultural difference: we will ask how ‘other’ peoples and cultures have been classified, understood, and represented at different times, using the island of New Guinea as a case study. We will attribute popular representations of backwardness to late nineteenth century theories of biological and social evolutionism. We will investigate how anthropologists were able to offer a debunking to these theories by emphasizing the importance of culture, language and communication, rather than skin color and race. We will then ask: how were anthropologists able to gain such first hand information about other cultures. How did the paradigmatic anthropological method of fieldwork and participant observation emerged during the era of colonialism, and how has it changed over the years. Then we will turn our attention to the Mundurucu of Amazonia and the Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea. We will examine some of the classic topics of anthropological inquiry in these two societies: kinship, gender, family, marriage, affinity, descent, religion, economic exchange, ritual, symbolism and magic. Then we will examine the colonial experience through the story of the production, exchange and consumption of sugar. We will finish the course by looking at the emergence of the national ordering of human societies and how local relations of inequality define this global condition. Anthropology now plays an important role in challenging these new social orders, by supporting indigenous movements and developing an activist agenda. Public and Applied anthropology (such as medical anthropology) have also emerged within the discipline, and they offer non-academic venues to those who would like to use anthropological cross-cultural comparison and critique in solving contemporary problems. Overall, readings for this course aspire to familiarize students with different locations around the globe in the hopes that they will learn more about cultural diversity, social complexity and global political changes. Learning about others, Boas reminds us, helps us learn about ourselves.

## Course Objectives:

- 1) Help students appreciate cultural diversity and comprehend a wide variety of social problems around the world.
- 2) Understand and analyze the differences and commonalities of people and societies across the world
- 3) Develop the ability to think critically about what “culture” means in various contexts by doing hands-on ethnographic research fieldwork.
- 4) Use anthropological concepts and gain skills for critically reading and visually analyzing the world around us

## Prerequisites:

No prerequisites are necessary, except an open mind and a compassionate heart. The course might lead you to look at yourself and your personal history reflexively. Critical thinking and intellectual curiosity will be encouraged in the classroom, coupled with commitments to social justice and equality for all cultures in this world.

## Requirements and grade evaluation:

Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

### **Class participation (15%)**

Each student is expected to fully participate in class discussions and activities, having read the required readings ahead of time. You should all come to each class with questions and comments about the assigned readings and key concepts. Class attendance is mandatory and class participation is important. You can also post your thoughts and concerns online via the course conference (ANTH104-F08). You are encouraged to come to my office hours and seek help if you need it, or advice, or just discuss the readings. Students are required to attend the field trip to Harvard’s Peabody Museum on Saturday, September 27.

### **Examinations (mid-term and final, 25% each)**

The objective and analytical knowledge you obtain from this class will be tested in an in-class mid-term examination and a take home final examination.

### **Field research paper (20%)**

Five to seven (5-7) pages paper on an ethnographic research exercise. Students will learn about the ethnographic method through a series of small exercises on campus. You may begin this project after the mid-term. You will also have to make an in-class presentation of your project during the last two days of classes. More guidelines will be provided. Your paper is due at the end of the exam period.

### **Three short responses (5% each)**

One page maximum response to questions about class readings, films, and events. See due dates in the syllabus

## List of Books and readings:

The following books have been ordered for you to purchase at the Wellesley College Bookstore. The rest of the readings are on e-reserve or posted on the first class conference.

Mintz, Sidney Sweetness and Power: The place of sugar in modern history, Penguin Books, 1985  
 Monaghan John and Peter Just Social and Cultural Anthropology: A very short introduction, Oxford, 2000  
 Weiner, Annette The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1988  
 Murphy Yolanda and Robert Murphy Women of the Forest, Columbia University Press, 1985

**List of Films: (on e-reserve)****First Contact**, 1984 (GN671.N5 F57 1984)**Trobriland Cricket: An ingenious response to colonialism**, 1975 (GV928.T7 T76 1975)**Black Harvest**, 1992 (GN671.N5 B52 1992)**Race: The power of an illusion**, Part 1, 2003 (GN269.R34 2003)**Papapapa**, 1997 (PN1995.9.E96 P36 1997)**Bronislaw Malinowski: Off the Verandah** (From the Stranger abroad series), 1990 (GN20.S77 1990)**Please Note:**

All students are expected to abide to the Wellesley College Honor Code. At the same time, you are encouraged to work in groups and learn from each other.

Students with disabilities who may need accommodations are encouraged to work with the Learning and Teaching Center. They should also feel free to talk to me.

**Course Outline****Thursday, September 4****Introducing Anthropology: What is the ethnographic looking-glass?****Read:**

Monaghan and Just, Introduction and chapter 1

**Film: First Contact**

**Monday, September 8****How is the 'other' represented in popular media?****Read:**

Steinmetz, George "Irian Jaya's people of the trees." National Geographic, February 1996:34-43  
(e-reserve)

**Thursday, September 11****Who were the Stone Agers? What is evolution?****Read:**

Darwin, Charles *The descent of man*, 1871 (e-reserve)

Berman, Judith, 1999 "Bad hair days in the Paleolithic: modern (re)constructions of the cave man." American Anthropologist 101(2):288-304 (e-reserve)

**Monday, September 15****Did societies evolve, like biological species, from simpler to more complex forms?****Read:**

Edward Tyler "The science of culture" 1873 (e-reserve)

Morgan, Lewis Henry, "Ethnical periods", 1877 (e-reserve)

**Thursday, September 18****What does the concept of race mean? Is there such thing as race?****Read:**Elizabeth Chin "Ethnically Correct Dolls: Toying with the Race Industry" American Anthropologist 101(2) : 105-321) (e-reserve)American Anthropological Association (AAA) statement on 'race' <http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm>**In class screening of the film: Race****Monday, September 22****What makes us human? Culture? What is culture?****Read:**

Monaghan and Just, chapter 2

Boas, Franz "The methods of ethnology", 1920 (e-reserve)

Benedict, Ruth "Psychological types in the cultures of the Southwest" (1930) (e-reserve)

**Due today: Response paper #1: What were your reactions to the film "Race?"****Thursday, September 25****What makes human? Language/culture/personality?****Read:**

Whorf "Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language (e-reserve)

Thomson, David "The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis: Worlds shaped by words (1975) (e-reserve)

**Saturday, September 27****Field trip to the Peabody Museum, Harvard University****Monday, September 29****What is social?****Read:**

Monaghan and Just, chapter 3

Mauss, Marcel, The Gift (excerpts), 1925Malinowski, Bronislaw "Introduction" Argonauts of the Western Pacific (e-reserve)**Film: Off the verandah****Thursday, October 2****What is ethnography?****Read:**

Weiner, Annette, Introduction and chapter 1, pp.1-27

Murphy and Murphy, Chapter 3

**Due today: Response #2: Your reactions to the Peabody Museum**

**Monday, October 6**

**What is ecology and subsistence?**

*Read:*

Murphy and Murphy, Chapters 1-2

Lee, Richard, "The Hunters: Scarce resources in the Kalahari" (e-reserve)

**Thursday, October 9 mid-term examination**

**Monday, October 13 No class, fall break**

**Thursday, October 16**

**Kinship and descent**

*Read:*

Monaghan and Just, chapter 4

Murphy and Murphy, chapter 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9

**In class viewing of the film Trobriand Cricket: An ingenious response to colonialism (1975)**

**Monday, October 20**

**Thursday, October 23**

**Marriage, family and gender**

*Read:*

Weiner, Annette Chapters 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8

**Monday, October 27**

**Symbolism, religion and magic**

*Read:*

Murphy and Murphy, chapter 5

Weiner, Annette, Chapter 4

**Thursday, October 30**

**Development, global capitalism**

*Read:*

Murphy and Murphy, Chapter 8

**Monday, November 3**

**Colonizing plants and humans**

*Read:*

Mintz, Sydney, Sweetness and Power, Introduction and Chapter 1

**Due today: Response Paper #3: Does the film Trobriand Cricket enhance or diminish our understanding of Trobriand society? How does it complement Weiner's book?**

**Thursday, November 6**  
**Continue on Colonialism**

**Read:**

Mintz, Sydney Sweetness and power, Chapters 2 and 3

**Monday, November 10**  
**Continue on Colonialism**

**Read:**

Mintz, Sydney Sweetness and power, Chapter 4

**Film: Papapapa**

**Thursday, November 13**  
**Ordering the world nationally: nationalism in a post-colonial world**

**Read:**

Geertz, Clifford "After the Revolution (e-reserve)

Geertz, Clifford "The integrative revolution" (e-reserve)

**Monday, November 17**  
**Nation and the state**

**Read:**

Monaghan and Just, chapter 5

Liisa Malkki "National Geographic: The rooting of peoples and the territorialization of national identity among scholars and refugees," Cultural Anthropology, 7(1):24-44, 1992

**Thursday, November 20**  
**Culture Change and Anthropology: Indigenous movements and human rights**

**Read:**

Monaghan and Just, chapter 6

Turner, Terence "Kapayo Resistance" (e-reserve)

**Film: In class-viewing of Black Harvest (1992)**

**Monday, November 24**  
**Public anthropology**

**Read:**

Monaghan and Just, Chapter 7

Lutz, Catherine, 2002 "Making war at home in the United States: Militarization and the current crisis." American Anthropologist 104(3):723-735 (e-reserve)

Abu-Lughod, Lila, 2002. "Do Muslim women really need saving? Anthropological reflections on cultural relativism and its others." American Anthropologist 104(3):783-790 (e-reserve)

**Thursday, November 27, No class, Thanksgiving**

**Monday, December 1**  
**Applying anthropology**

***Read:***

Monaghan and Just, chapter 8

Bailey, Eric "Medical anthropologist as Health Department Consultant" Practicing Anthropology,  
16(1):13-15, 1994 (e-reserve)

**Thursday, December 4 student presentations on their ethnography**

**Monday, December 8 student presentations on their ethnography**

**Self-scheduled final exam and ethnography papers due by 4:30, December 19**

**Have a wonderful winter break!!!!**