

## **ANTH 100: Introduction to Cultural Anthropology**

Brown University, Fall 2023

MW 11am-11:50am, Friedman Hall 208

Professor Myles Lennon (myles\_lennon@brown.edu);

Office Hours: Th 4:00 - 6:00 PM EST, 85 Waterman, Room 312, sign up for OH here

TAs: Li Caraballo and Bella Schultz

### **Course Description**

This course is an introduction to cultural anthropology, the study of human society and culture. Broadly speaking, anthropology "makes the strange familiar, and the familiar strange," challenging ingrained assumptions about the human condition, popular understandings of human societies, and conventional wisdom on cultural difference. Anthropologists primarily work toward these ends through ethnography, the long-term, intensive study of different social groups and cultures. Students will be expected to think critically about ethnography as a way of understanding society and cultural difference. Drawing from work in a wide range of geographical and historical contexts, this course will introduce some of the major themes in contemporary anthropological thinking about culture, race, gender, sexuality, colonialism, class, the state, medicine, and modernity, among other things.

### **Course Learning Objectives:**

Cultural anthropology offers us ways of seeing the world differently. In this course, you will learn to challenge your assumptions and normative ideas about how political power works, think sympathetically and empathetically with people who are unlike you, analyze everyday texts and behavior that you might otherwise take for granted, learn about different cultures, and better understand what connects many different social groups across the modern world. You will learn this through exposure to, close written engagement with, and class discussions on anthropological research methods and modes of analysis.

### **Course Requirements**

*Participation:* Students are expected to attend all lectures (twice a week) and discussion sections (once a week). Active participation in weekly sections is encouraged. **Sections will first convene on Friday, September 15.** While class discussions will primarily take place in sections—not lectures—if you have a burning question by all means feel free to speak up or raise your hand during a lecture! Alternatively, feel free to consult with me after class about anything on your mind. And more than anything, schedule an office hours appointment if you'd like to discuss anything--questions, comments, concerns, friendly introductions—whatever you wish! Also note that lecture slides will be posted on Canvas prior to class.

*Response Papers:* Students will submit three 3-4 page response papers (double spaced) focused on the assigned reading for any three weeks of your choosing. At least one of the three papers must be submitted by Week Seven and at least two of the three papers must be submitted by Week Ten. Response papers critically reflect on the central themes and arguments of the readings; they are not summaries or recapitulations of the main points. You are encouraged to

formulate a claim or a specific argument with regard to the readings, and to question or call attention to their overarching analyses, core ideas, or ethical quandaries. Response papers are due by 10 PM on Thursdays.

- *Alternate Response Paper:* In lieu of one of the three response papers, students can choose to do an Op-Ed-style piece on a current topic. Identify an issue in the news that you think anthropology could contribute perspectives on, and write an op-ed style opinion piece in which you assess the issue from an anthropological standpoint, drawing from course materials and course concepts. You can submit your Op-Ed by 10 PM on Thursday between Week Seven and Week Thirteen.

*Fieldnote/Analysis.* Spend at least 45 minutes observing a local cultural phenomenon, such as a dinner at the Ratty, a concern downtown, or leisurely activities on the Main Green. If you are concerned about in-person gatherings due to Covid, you can also observe social media, a Zoom call, or other online cultural phenomenon from your computer or phone instead of an in-person gathering. Take notes on what you observe in real time. Later, in a different color pen or font, mark up your own notes on your observations (this is the ‘analysis’ part), underlining and commenting on important themes you observe. Finally, write up your observations and analysis into a 3-4 page, double-spaced paper describing and interpreting this particular phenomenon. Consider the ethnographic writing that we’ll read in this course as a guidepost for your paper. You can submit your Fieldnote/Analysis by 10 PM on Thursday between Week Six and Week Eleven.

*Weekly Questions:* For weeks where you will not be preparing a response paper or submitting your Fieldnote/Analysis, you will write two questions regarding the readings. Questions are intended to inform your participation in section. Use your questions to identify ideas or themes that you would like to explore through in-depth discussion or ideas that you would like greater clarity on. Your weekly questions will be incorporated into your class participation grade. You will post your questions on a Google Doc that will be circulated on the Assignments tab of our Canvas site. Questions are due by 10 PM on Thursday.

*Final Examination:* The final exam will cover material from the entire course and will consist of three take-home essays. The final exam questions will be distributed on the last day of class and the essays will be due December 15.

## **Evaluation**

Exams, writing assignments and class participation will determine final grades:

- Class Participation 15%
- Reaction Papers 45%
- Fieldnote analysis 15%
- Final Exam 25%

## **Required Texts**

All of the required texts are available on Canvas.

## **Accessibility**

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Students who, by nature of a documented disability, require academic accommodations should contact me. Students may also contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu to discuss the process for requesting accommodations. Further information about ensuring accessibility and supporting students with disabilities may be found on the SEAS website.

## **Reading and Class Schedule**

### **Introductions - 09/06**

### **The Culture Concept - 09/11 + 09/13**

Priscilla Medeiros and Emily Cowall. 2017. The Culture Concept. *Perspectives: An Open Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*.

Lee Baker. 1998. Unraveling the Boasian Discourse: The Racial Politics of "Culture" in School Desegregation, 1944 – 1954. *Transforming Anthropology* 7(1): 15 -32.

Clifford Geertz. 1973. Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cock Fight. *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

### **Cultural Relativism - 09/18 + 09/20**

Lila Abu-Lughod. 2002. Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others. *American Anthropologist* 104(3): 783 – 790.

Claude Lévi-Strauss. 2016. *We Are All Cannibals*. Selected chapters:

- "Santa Claus Burned as a Heretic" p. 1-18
- "We are all Cannibals" p. 83-89
- "A Lesson in Wisdom from Mad Cows" p. 112-119

E.E. Evans-Pritchard. 1937. The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events. *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*.

### **Identity Formation - 09/25 + 09/27**

Gayatri Reddy. 2005. *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India*.

- Chapters 1, 3, 6, 8, and 9

## **Suffering and Society: Medical Anthropology - 10/02 + 10/04**

Farmer, Paul. 1996. On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View From Below. *Daedalus* 125(1): 261-283.

Angela Garcia. 2010. *The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession Across the Rio Grande*

- Pages 1 – 29
- Chapter 1
- Chapter 3

## **Doing Ethnography - 10/11**

*(Indigenous People's Day; no class on 10/09)*

Nancy Scheper-Hughes. 2004. Parts Unknown: Undercover Ethnography of the Organ-trafficking Underworld. *Ethnography* 5(1): 29-73.

Aimee Meredith Cox. 2015. *Shapeshifters: Black Girls and the Choreography of Citizenship*.

- Pages 1 -11; 20 - 28; 31 - 35
- Chapter 1
- Chapter 4

## **The State - 10/16 + 10/18**

James Scott. 1998. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*.

- Introduction
- Chapter 2: Cities, People and Language
- Chapter 3: Authoritarian High Modernism

Catherine Kingfisher and Michael Goldsmith. 2001. Reforming Women in the United States and Aotearoa/New Zealand: A Comparative Ethnography of Welfare Reform in Global Context. *American Anthropologist* 103(3): 714 – 732.

Colin Hoag. 2010. The Magic of the Populace: An Ethnography of Illegibility in the South African Immigration Bureaucracy. *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 33(1)

## **(International) Development - 10/23 + 10/25**

Arturo Escobar. 1995. *Encountering Development: The Making and the Unmaking of the Third World*.

- Chapter 1 (Only need to read pages 3 - 14 [PDF pages 1 -12]; the rest is optional)
- Chapter 2 (Only need to read pages 21 to 39 [PDF pages: 1 - 19]; the rest is optional)

James Ferguson. 1994. The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development' and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho. *The Ecologist* 24(5)

Kiran Asher. 2009. *Black and Green: Afro-Colombians, Development, and Nature in the Pacific Lowlands*.

- Pages 1-27
- Chapter 2

## **Capitalism and the Corporation - 10/30 + 11/01**

Karen Ho. 2008. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*

- Chapter 1
- Chapter 2

Aihwa Ong. 1987. The Production of Possession: Spirits and the Multinational Corporation in Malaysia. *American Ethnologist* 15(1).

David Graeber. 2018. *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*.

- Chapter 1
- Chapter 4
- Chapter 5

## **Modernity and the Body (Politic) - 11/06 + 11/08**

Michel Foucault. 1978. Right of Death and Power over Life. *The History of Sexuality Vol.1*.

Alexander Edmonds. 2010. *Pretty Modern: Beauty, Sex, and Plastic Surgery in Brazil*.

- Pages 1 -28, 37 – 74

Gloria Wekker. 2016. Of Homo Nostalgia and (Post)Coloniality: Or, Where Did All the Critical White Gay Men Go?

## **Nature and Alterity - 11/13 + 11/15**

Bruce Braun. 2003 On the Raggedy Edge of Risk": Articulations of Race and Nature after Biology. *Race, Nature, and the Politics of Difference*.

Jake Kosek. 2010. Ecologies of Empire, On the New Uses of the Honeybee. *Cultural Anthropology*.

Heather Davis and Zoe Todd. 2017. On the Importance of a Date Or, Decolonizing the Anthropocene. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 16(4)

### **OPTIONAL:**

Zine Magubane. 2003. Simians, Savages, Skulls, and Sex Science and Colonial Militarism

## **Religion - 11/20 + 11/22**

Victor Turner. 1969. Liminality and Communitas. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*. pp. 94-130.

Aisha M. Beliso-DeJesús. 2015. Contentious Diasporas: Gender, Sexuality, and Heteronationalisms in the Cuban Iyanifa Debate. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (40)4

\*\*\*\*\*Guest lecture on 11/22 by Luke Forrester Johnson, Princeton University\*\*\*\*\*

## **Science and Subjectivity - 11/27 + 11/29**

Everett Zhang. 2007. The Birth of Nanke (Men's Medicine) in China, The Making of the Subject of Desire. *American Ethnologist* 34(3)

Jenny Reardon and Kim TallBear. 2012. "Your DNA is Our History": Genomics, Anthropology, and the Construction of Whiteness as Property. *Current Anthropology* 53 S5: S233 – S245.

Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas. 2007. Biological Citizenship. *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*.

### **OPTIONAL:**

Michelle Murphy. 2004. Immodest Witnessing: The Epistemology of Vaginal Self-Examination in the U.S. Feminist Self-Help Movement.