Anthropology 101 is an introduction to social or cultural anthropology, the study of human behavior in the context of culture. Or better cultures because the anthropological assumption is that every society has its own sense of what is moral and what is not, what is attractive and what is not, what is edible and what is not. As a discipline, cultural anthropology assumes that that study of culture is the study of difference or otherness.

The scientific goal of cultural anthropology is understanding the different ways the societies of the world have gone about the business of being human. The humanistic goal is entering on the journey to the self by way of the detour of the other.

Traditionally cultural anthropologists tried to understand societies faraway from the kinds of places where anthropologists themselves (and the people who read anthropological accounts) lived. That separation is has not been true for a long time. The world is all jumbled up nowadays, and difference begins at the end of our noses, not at the border of our country.

The task nowadays, to quote Clifford Geertz, is “to enlarge the possibility of intelligible discourse between people quite different from one another in interest, outlook, wealth, and power, and yet contained in a world where tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other’s way.”

REQUIRED BOOKS

Achebe, Things Fall Apart
Weiner, The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea
Ramdya, Bollywood Weddings
Kolker, The Immigrant Advantage

RESERVE READINGS

Davis-Floyd, “The Technocratic Model”, in Birth as an American Rite of Passage, pp. 44-72, paper reserve.
TOPICS AND READINGS

September 5    The Course


September 12   Short ethnographic paper due, discussed in class


September 17   Achebe, Part One.

September 19   Achebe, Part Two.

September 21   Achebe, Part Three.


September 26   Weiner, chapters 3, 4, and 5.

September 28   Weiner, chapters 8, 9, and 10.

October 1      Video: The Trobrianders, shown in class, read chapters 6 and 7.

October 3      Weiner review

3. Birth as a Cultural Practice: Culturalizing a Natural Event, Birth and Hospitals, the Economics of Birth, the Mayan example


October 8      Discussion with Chris Gillis, Lewiston midwife
October 10          Jordan, “Buscando La Forma”, pp. 15-44.
October 15        **Hour Examination**
October 17-21      Autumn Recess

4. Marriage as Culture, Transnationalism and Media, Culture as Imaginative Process

October 22
October 24    Ramdya, *Bollywood Weddings*, chapters 1, 2, and 3.
October 29    Person and Caste
October 31    Culture and Media
November 1   **Marriage Paper Due**

5. Refugees: People without Places, the Human Cost of a Global Problem, Somalia

November 12   Video: Rain in a Dry Land, shown in class.
November 14   Discussion with a person from Lewiston’s Somali Community
November 16   Lindkvist, “The Reach and Limits of Cultural Accommodation,” reserve. pp. 1-59, and
November 17-25 Thanksgiving recess
November 28   **Refugee Paper due**

6. Ethnicity, Migration, Diasporic Identities, Communities among other Communities
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Class attendance and participation in class discussions (15%). I value what students have to say and will try to encourage everyone to voice their opinions. I am not very good at drawing out people who do not raise their hands. Help me out—raise your hand. Regular and thoughtful contributions to class discussions will raise a student’s grade. You cannot do so without finishing the readings on time. Quiet people will not be penalized; people who do not come to class will be; and people who chatter with their neighbor during class will be treated with extreme prejudice.

I am uncomfortable with students’ taking notes on their laptops or hand-held devices—from a professor’s perspective a class is a community, short-lived and intentional, but still a community. Working on a laptop draws you away from participating in that community (in a way that taking notes does not). Please don’t use a laptop in class unless you have some special need and have talked to me first.

2. An hour examination, worth 25%, and three short research papers, each worth 10%.

3. Final Examination (30%).

4. Short research papers (the ones due September 12, November 1 and 28). I have scheduled days in class for group discussion of the research papers—on the dinner table, marriage, and refugees. Your contribution is worth 10% of the final grade. Please bring your contribution in written form so I can see it in the event we do not get to discuss it in class. Your written discussion should be brief—three typewritten pages or so—and handed in after class. The paper should begin with your response to readings and proceed onwards to your research—which can come by way of library research, the internet, or ethnographic interview. I will explain what I have in mind by way of a handout as the day approaches.

I regard films and videos as part of the curriculum. You need to make yourself responsible for the videos and films just as with readings and lectures. Expect to find questions on the final examination regarding the films and videos you have seen. Take notes on what you see.

All students are responsible for reading and understanding the Bates College statement on academic honesty, crediting of sources, and plagiarism.