COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is culture and why does it matter? How can we understand the differences and similarities that exist between human societies, from past and present? This course is an introduction to the discipline of cultural anthropology, a discipline that has both contributed to and critiqued the concept of culture for over a century now. We will examine the key concepts,
theories and methods that constitute the intellectual framework of cultural anthropology and we will learn how to both engage with and challenge this framework.

In the first part of the course, we will cover core topics including the development of the notion of culture and the ethnographic fieldwork method via foundational texts by anthropologists such as Malinowski, Mead and Geertz. The second half of the course will explore more contemporary challenges and critiques within cultural anthropology through an exploration of topics ranging from race, gender, class and colonialism to power, globalization and empire. Throughout the course, culture will serve as a primary lens through which we will ask some very pressing questions about local, regional and global human practices.

The overall goal of the course is to provide students with a strong foundation in the basic tenants of cultural anthropology and the mode of ethnographic writing, while cultivating an anthropological perspective—critical and engaged—to how one approaches the world.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE BREAKDOWN

This is a heavy reading course emphasizing critical discussion and participatory learning, regardless of class size. Students’ primary tasks are to seriously engage with the readings each week, present ideas in a clear and intellectually generous manner and complete writing assignments on time. Class attendance is mandatory. Consistent and valuable contribution to class discussion will raise your grade; poor attendance or not participating will lower it.

Attendance, Written Discussion Points, In-class Exercises, Class Participation: You will be expected to take an active role in this class; we will discuss texts together and conduct mini-fieldwork exercises which require you to be present and engaged. Each time we meet you must come to class with three written key points or questions related to the readings for that day. These discussion points will serve as a guide for class discussion; please be prepared to share them out loud should you be asked to do so. All of these factors contribute to your class participation grade.

Group Presentations: You will give a short presentation within a small group on one week’s readings, which you will turn in for a grade. Your presentation should summarize all the key points in the text while raising critical questions for the class. Your individual grade for this assignment will be based on your preparation, performance and content.

In-Class Quizzes: You will be presented with one broad question regarding the week’s readings, which you will have 20 minutes to answer at the start of class. These quizzes are designed to test your knowledge of the readings. There will be 5 quizzes throughout the duration of the course (dates TBA).

Final Paper: You will produce a final ethnographic research paper on a topic of your choice drawing from the class readings. You will be required to conduct original fieldwork for this paper, such as an interview, focus group session or participant observation. We will speak extensively and often about the process of writing these papers; a written abstract will be due (date TBA) towards the second half of the course.
Grade Breakdown:

- Class Participation: 10%
- In-class quizzes: 25%
- Group Presentation: 25%
- Final Research Paper: 40%

CLASSROOM AND EMAIL ETIQUETTE

An overall goal of this course is to provide you with the space and time necessary to cultivate better classroom discussion skills. This means you will be interacting with your classmates (and not only your professor) during each class either by raising questions, responding to questions or articulating your perspective on the readings. You must engage your classmates in a respectful and generous manner. The classroom is a safe space. All points of view will be heard and everyone will be respected in class.

You may email me at Rsweis@bates.edu. Emails should contain a proper greeting and closing. Avoid using overly informal language in your emails. The language you use in an academic message should be different from what you would use in a text message or IM chat. Please note that emails sent after 5:00pm may not be read until the next morning.

You may enjoy your coffee, water or other (non-alcoholic) beverage in class. We meet in the middle of the day and we all have super busy schedules. Feel free to eat in class if you need to. But if you do, be discrete about it and try not to disrupt class discussion or draw attention to yourself. And if you’d like, you may bring enough for the entire class to enjoy.

Arriving late to class and stepping out during discussion are both highly disruptive practices while class is in session; please consider this and do your best to keep such disruptions at a minimum.

THANK YOU FOR PUTTING AWAY ALL YOUR ELECTRONIC DEVISES AND TURNING OFF (COMPLETELY OFF) YOUR MOBILE PHONES IN CLASS

IMPORTANT

The syllabus is a fluid document, subject to change based on your collective needs/interests. You will be notified in advanced if this happens.

Late papers will be graded down unless an extension has been granted.

All students are responsible for reading and understanding the Bates College Statement on Academic Honesty.
If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon. Please also request the Dean of Students to send a statement verifying your disability and specifying the accommodations you will need.

**REQUIRED COURSE BOOKS**

Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*
Boellstorff, Tom. *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*
Bourgois, Philippe. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*
Edmonds, Alexander. *Pretty Modern: Beauty, Sex, and Plastic Surgery in Brazil*
Evans-Pritchard, E.E. *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande*
Fernea, Elizabeth. *Guests of the Sheik: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village*
Mead, Margaret. *Coming of Age in Samoa*
Rosaldo, Renato. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**Week 1**

*Monday January 7*
   Course introduction: What is anthropology?

*Wednesday January 9*
   In-class reading: Horace Miner, “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema”
   Bronislaw Malinowski, “Introduction,” *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, available on Lyceum
   
   *In-class Youtube Clip*: Tales from the Jungle: Malinowski

**Week 2**

*Monday January 14*
   *In-class Youtube Clip*: TV show *Bewitched*, 1966 Episode “Witches and Warlocks”
E.E. Evans-Pritchard, “Witchcraft is an Organic and Hereditary Phenomenon” and “The Notion of Witchcraft explains Unfortunate Events,” in Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande

Wednesday January 16
E.E. Evans-Pritchard, “Witch-Doctors,” in Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande

*In-class Youtube Clip: Finish Bewitched, 1966 Episode “Witches and Warlocks”*

Week 3

Monday January 21
***No-Class in Honor of MLK***

Wednesday January 23
Margaret Mead, “A Day in Samoa,” “The Girl and Her Age Group,” and “Formal Sex Relations,” in Coming of Age in Samoa

*In-class Youtube Clip: Tales from the Jungle: Margaret Mead*

Week 4

Monday January 28
Elizabeth Fernea, Introduction, Part 1 and Part II, in Guests of the Sheik: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village

Wednesday January 30
Elizabeth Fernea, Part III, in Guests of the Sheik: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village

Week 5

Monday February 4
Clifford Geertz, “Introduction: Thick Description,” in The Interpretation of Cultures

Wednesday February 6
James Clifford, “Notes on (Field)notes,” in Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology, ed. Sanjek, available on Lyceum

*Fieldwork Exercise: Participant Observation on the Bates Campus*

Week 6
Monday February 11
Lila Abu-Lughod, “Guest and Daughter” and “Identity in Relationship,” in Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society

Wednesday February 13
In-class Youtube clip: SNL Happy Valentine’s Day
Lila Abu-Lughod, “Honor and the Virtues of Autonomy” and “Modesty, Gender and Sexuality,” in Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society

Week 7

*** NO CLASS ENJOY YOUR BREAK ***

Week 8

Monday February 25
Roger Sanjek, “The Enduring Inequalities of Race,” in Race, eds. Sanjek and Gregory, available on Lyceum

In-class Film: Race: The Power of An Illusion, (168 minutes)

Wednesday February 27

Finish In-class Film: Race: The Power of an Illusion

Week 9

Monday March 4
Renato Rosaldo, “Preface” and “Grief and a Headhunter’s Rage,” in Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis

Wednesday March 6
Renato Rosaldo, “The Erosion of Classic Norms,” and “Imperialist Nostalgia” in Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis

Week 10

Monday March 11
Philippe Bourgois, “Introduction,” “Violating Apartheid in the United States” and “A Street History of El Barrio,” in In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio

Wednesday March 13
Philippe Bourgois, “Crackhouse Management” and “‘Goin’ Legit’” in In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio

Week 11

Monday March 25

Wednesday March 27

Week 12

Monday April 1
Tom Boellstorff, Part 1 and Part 2, in Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human

Wednesday April 3
Tom Boellstorff, Part 3, in Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human

***FINAL PAPER DUE WEDNESDAY APRIL 10 BY 5:00PM IN MY MAILBOX***