COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the theories and methods that form the basis of modern anthropology. Together, the readings comprise a chronological history of our discipline, tracing many of its central intellectual and ethical problems leading up to the present moment. It is both a course on the intellectual history of anthropology and a course in which we subject the discipline to the kind of rigorous analysis and interpretation anthropologists engage in while studying “other” cultures. We will analyze anthropological texts as social artifacts and as the products of particular historical configurations of power and expertise.

For example, we will explore the conceptual tools and discourses adopted by Western European authors in their study of “the primitive,” “the savage,” or “kinship-based” and “Third World” societies. Instead of asking what the work of Margaret Mead or Evans-Pritchard can tell us about Samoans or the Nuer, we instead ask what it can tell us about American and British anthropology and the political worlds in which Mead and Evans-Pritchard lived. By adopting a
self-reflexive, critical stance such as this we situate the discipline of anthropology in its historical and cultural context.

Among the approaches and topics examined are: cultural evolutionism, historical particularism, British structural-functionalism, psychological anthropology, postmodernism, feminist anthropology, ethnography as writing and globalization theory. The overall goal is to examine the different theoretical approaches that have dominated anthropology over the past century and how they came to be.

**REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE BREAKDOWN**

This is an intensive seminar-style class emphasizing classroom discussion and participatory learning. Students’ primary tasks are to 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.

You will come to class having prepared three written questions related to the readings that day. These questions will serve as a guide for discussion; please be prepared to share your questions with the class each time we meet.

Over the course of the semester, four mini-papers will make up a good portion of your grade. About 3-5 double-spaced pages in length, these papers should not only summarize key points in the readings, but they should also situate the authors and their work in their political and historical contexts. You should deal with some concept, term or idea in a focused manner and offer an interpretation or analysis based on the school of thought from which it emerged. Grades are based on your knowledge of the readings, the discipline’s history and your creativity in writing and thinking. While you’ll have a consistent amount of work over the semester, you will not have a final paper, exam or mid term.

Finally, you will produce a Senior Thesis Prospectus and conduct peer review of other students’ prospectus.

Grade Breakdown:

- Attendance and Participation: 20%
- 4 Mini-papers: 50% (each paper = 12.5% of your total course grade)
- Senior Thesis Prospectus: 30%

**CLASSROOM AND EMAIL ETIQUETTE**

Another 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.

Enjoy your water, coffee or other (non-alcoholic) beverage in class. Feel free to eat a snack as well. But please be courteous to those around you and do not draw attention to yourself while you eat. And if you’d like, bring enough to share with the rest of the class!

THANK YOU FOR TURNING YOUR MOBILE PHONES OFF DURING CLASS

COURSE READINGS

**Required Books**

- Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*
- Behar and Gordon, *Women Writing Culture*
- Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*
- Boas, *Race, Language and Culture*
- Mead, *Coming of Age in Somao (2001 ed.)*
- Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*
- Said, *Orientalism*

**Reserved Required Readings**

- Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*
- Clifford, *Writing Culture*
- Frazer, *The Golden Bough*
- Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*
- Geertz, *Islam Observed*
- Lavenda & Schultz, *Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology*
- Lessa & Vogt, *Reader in Comparative Religion*
- Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*
- Reiter ed., *Towards an Anthropology of Women*
- Tylor, *The Origins of Culture, Part 1*
- Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History*
SCHEDULE OF DUE DATES

- September 20: Mini-paper #1
- October 2: Senior Thesis Prospectus
- October 23: Mini-paper #2
- November 15: Mini-paper #3
- December 11: Mini-Paper #4

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1 COURSE INTRODUCTION

Thursday September 6
What does it mean to do the anthropology of anthropology?

Week 2 CULTURAL EVOLUTIONISM

Tuesday September 11
Tylor, The Origins of Culture, Ch 1-2
Tylor, “Animism” in Reader in Comparative Religion by Lessa and Vogt

Thursday September 13
Frazer, “Sympathetic Magic” in Reader in Comparative Religion by Lessa and Vogt
Frazer, The Golden Bough (1911-15), Abridged Version, Ch 4

Week 3 SENIOR THESIS

Tuesday September 18
Session with Social Science Reference Librarian Laura Juraska on improving Senior Thesis research skills (meet in library)

Read prospectuses, proposals, senior theses, articles from anthropology journals.

Thursday September 20
***1st Mini-paper due at start of class***
In-class film “Franz Boas” (1858-1942)
Week 4  CULTURE AND RACE

Tuesday September 25
Boas, Race, Language and Culture, “The Limits to the Comparative Method in Anthropology” and “Methods of Ethnology”

Thursday September 27
Boas, Race, Language and Culture, “The Aims of Ethnology”
In class video: Margaret Mead “Four Families”

Week 5  SENIOR THESIS WORKSHOP

Tuesday October 2
***Rough Draft of Senior Thesis Prospectus due at start of class***

Thursday October 4
Read and critique Senior Thesis Prospectuses

Week 6  PATTERNS OF CULTURE

Tuesday October 9
Benedict, Patterns of Culture (1934), Ch 1-4

Thursday October 11
Benedict, Patterns of Culture, Ch 6-8
In-class Video: Zora Neale Hurston, Biography

Week 7  STRUCTURE & FUNCTION

Tuesday October 16
Radcliffe-Brown, Structure and Function in Primitive Society, Introduction, Ch 8-10
Levi-Strauss, Savage Mind, Introduction

Thursday October 18
**BREAK**

Week 8  INTERPRETIVE ANTHROPOLOGY

Tuesday October 23
Week 9  POWER, KNOWLEDGE, REPRESENTATION

Thursday October 25
Geertz, Islam Observed, Ch 1 and 2

Wednesday October 24
* * * 2nd Mini-paper due at start of class***
Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, Ch 1

Thursday October 25
Geertz, Islam Observed, Ch 1 and 2

Week 10

Tuesday October 30
In-class video: Edward Said “On Orientalism”
Said, Orientalism, Introduction

Thursday November 1
Said, Orientalism, Ch 1 and 2

Week 11  WRITING CULTURE

Tuesday November 6
Asad, Genealogies of Religion, Introduction, Ch 1-2

Thursday November 8
Wolf, Europe and the People Without History, Introduction and Ch 12

Week 12  ***ENJOY YOUR BREAK***

Week 13  FEMINIST ANTHROPOLOGY

Tuesday November 27
Behar, Women Writing Culture, Introduction and Ch 3
Thursday November 29
Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes” (1988)

**Week 14  GLOBALIZATION**

*Tuesday December 4*
Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, Ch 1-2

*Thursday December 6*
Gupta and Ferguson, “Beyond Culture,” *Cultural Anthropology*,
Vol. 7, No. 1 (1992)

*Tuesday December 11 (Final exam week Dec 11-14)*

***4th Mini-paper due in my mailbox by 5:00pm***

**IMPORTANT**

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.

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

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.