

## INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

### ANTH 1002, Fall 2013

M, W 9:35-10:25  
Room: 1957 E. St.

### Professor Sarah Wagner

Office: 301 Hortense Amsterdam  
House  
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### Course Description

What is cultural anthropology? Etymology tells us that at its root anthropology [*anthropos* + *logos*] is the study of human beings. The phrase “cultural anthropology” narrows the scope: the study of human culture and social experience. But what does that mean? What exactly do cultural anthropologists do? Whom or what do they study and why? Perhaps most important of all, how can cultural anthropology help us understand the world we live in?

In answering these questions, this course offers an introduction to the field of cultural anthropology—its methods, language, key concepts, and characteristic ways of thinking about the spectrum of human diversity. We will learn about the field’s breadth and methodologies, sample some of its classical themes, and explore contemporary issues of research. With an eye toward appreciating both differences and commonalities, this course examines how human beings live their lives: how we eat, work, play, fight, pray; how we bury our dead and care for our living; how we form families and societies, define neighbors and nations; how we interact with one another. We will explore these topics through a range of sources, including ethnography, social theory, historical analyses, and audio and video recordings.

### Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the methods and object of study of sociocultural anthropology.
2. Use broad anthropological concepts such as culture, society, structure, function, and process to analyze social phenomena, constructs, and categories.
3. Apply anthropological concepts to understand their own social worlds and cultural perspectives.
4. Exercise skills in critical reading and analytical reasoning, where critical thinking is defined as analyzing and engaging with the concepts that underlie an argument.
5. Demonstrate a mastery of cross-cultural perspectives, through which they critically analyze cultural difference as a fundamental aspect of human nature.

## **Course Requirements and Grading Criteria**

Grades are based on the following components:

- Short papers (25%)
- Class/section participation (20%)
- Midterm exam (25%)
- Final exam (30%)

**Short papers** – There are two short papers (3-4 pages each, 1.5 spaced) assigned. The first, due **September 25** and worth **10%**, will be based on an ethnographic exercise and will employ ideas from the readings and discussion to date. The second, due **November 20** and worth **15%**, will be a reflection paper related to the ethnography *Do Glaciers Listen?* Students must submit both papers via Safe Assign and in hard copy.

**Participation** – The class/section participation grade is based on participation in section discussions as well as on attendance in both lecture and section meetings. The total participation grade is broken down as follows: **5%** on lecture attendance; **5%** on discussion attendance; **5%** on section participation; and **5%** on in-section assignments. Note: random attendance checks during the lecture classes will take place throughout the semester, and section attendance will be taken regularly. After three missed classes (section and lecture), the participation grade will be lowered a full grade with each additional absence.

**Exams** – The midterm and final exams will cover material from the assigned reading, lectures, films, and class discussions, and will consist of definitions, short-answer questions, and essays. Please note carefully the dates of these exams and mark your calendars accordingly; you cannot make up an exam except in the case of an emergency (e.g., requiring official notice from a doctor).

**Grading System:** Grades will be calculated according to the following range: A+ = 97-100; A = 94-96; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83; C+ = 77-79; etc.

## **Course Policies**

**Attendance:** Students are expected to arrive on time, attend all lectures and films, and complete all reading as scheduled on the syllabus, i.e., *prior* to the class meeting. Excused absences require official documentation. Please note that there will be no make up exams. You are responsible for obtaining from your classmates all material covered during any missed classes.

**Technology in the classroom:** Cell phones must be silenced or turned off during the class period. The use of laptops is limited to taking notes. If you are using your laptop for any other purpose, you will be asked to shut the computer off immediately and will not be allowed to use it in the future.

## **Academic Integrity**

All students must practice academic integrity. This means doing your own work, and when you use the words and ideas of others in any written work, you must: 1) identify direct quotations with quotation marks; and 2) indicate the source of ideas that are not your own by using social sciences notation form. If you have any questions at all about what this means, you should speak to the instructor. Plagiarism, and all breaches of academic integrity (for example, the sale of lecture-notes from this class, or the use of content from the internet as though it was your own), will be severely dealt with in accordance with the University's policies and procedures. For more information on The George Washington University's policies on academic integrity, consult: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

The policy on academic integrity in this course is that if you commit a breach of academic integrity in any assignment or exam, you will receive a zero for that assignment or exam. This infraction will be reported to the University's Academic Integrity Council. You will be clearly notified by the instructor in person OR by email before the Council is informed.

### Special Needs

Please let me or your TA know right away if you have any special needs with respect to how this course will be conducted. Do not wait to do this. If you need extra time for exams, you must register with Disability Support Service (DSS). The DDS website is as follows: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

### Required Texts

- 📖 Terry Williams, *Crackhouse: Notes from the End of the Line* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992)
- 📖 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1967)
- 📖 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*
- 📖 Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005)












All other reading assignments will be available on Blackboard in the weekly folder under "Electronic Reserves."











This syllabus is subject to change. Discussion sections will follow the syllabus but are also led according to the individual TAs.

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## COURSE OUTLINE

Introducing sociocultural anthropology	
August 26	Introduction to the course and syllabus review
August 28	Cultural Meaning, Social Structure, and Knowledge Production 📖 Bohannon, Laura. 1966. "Shakespeare in the Bush," <i>Natural History</i> , August-September: 1-12. 📖 Hurston, Zora Neale, "Introduction," pp. 1-4 and "One," pp. 7-17 in <i>Mules and Men</i> (New York: HarperPerennial, 1990 [1935]). 🌐 Visit the Florida Memory website for the Zora Neale Hurston collection: <a href="http://www.floridamemory.com/onlineclassroom/zora_hurston/">http://www.floridamemory.com/onlineclassroom/zora_hurston/</a>

Sep 2	<p>No class / Labor Day</p> <p> Miner, Horace. 1956. "Body Ritual among the Nacirema," <i>American Anthropologist</i> 58:503-507</p> <p><b>*In-section assignment</b></p>
<b>Part I - Philosophical origins: colonialism, expansionism, and the study of difference</b>	
Sep 4	<p>Victorian Anthropology and civilizations compared</p> <p> Weiner, Jonathan, "What Darwin Saw," p. 17-36 in <i>Beak of the Finch: A Story of Evolution in Our Time</i> (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1994).</p> <p> Tylor, E. B., "The Science of Culture," p. 1-25 in <i>Primitive Culture</i> (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920 [1871]).</p>
Sept 9	<p>Biological determinism and measuring difference</p> <p> Gould, Stephen Jay, "Introduction" and "American Polygeny and Craniometry before Darwin," p. 51-88 in <i>The Mismeasure of Man</i>.</p> <p> Baker, Lee, Selections from Chapters 1, 2, and 3 (pp. 14-17; 26-31; and 54-61) in <i>From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954</i> (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).</p> <p> Wade, Nicolas, "Scientists Measure the Accuracy of a Racist Claim" <i>New York Times</i>, June 13, 2011: <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/14/science/14skull.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/14/science/14skull.html</a></p>
Sep 11	<p>21st century designs on difference</p> <p> Reardon, Jenny and Kim Tallbear. 2012. "Your DNA Is Our History: Genomics, Anthropology, and the Construction of Whiteness as Property." <i>Current Anthropology</i> 53(S5): S233-S245.</p> <p> Amy Harmon, "Where'd You Go with My DNA?" <i>New York Times</i>, April 24, 2010: <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/25/weekinreview/25harmon.html">http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/25/weekinreview/25harmon.html</a></p> <p> <b>Film:</b> <i>Couple in the Cage</i></p> <p><b>*In-section assignment</b></p>
<b>Part II - Culture, ethnography, and meaning</b>	
Sep 16	<p>The ethnographic enterprise and participant observation</p> <p> Bronislaw Malinowski, "Foreword," pp. xv-xvii and "The Subject, Method and Scope of This Inquiry," pp. 1-25 in <i>Argonauts of the Western Pacific</i> (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1984).</p> <p> Evans-Pritchard, E. E., "Appendix IV: Some Reminiscences and Reflections on Fieldwork," pp. 240-254 in <i>Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande</i></p>

Sept 18	<p>Reading culture like a text - symbolic/interpretive anthropology</p> <p> Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” pp. 3-30 in <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i> (New York: Basic Books, 1983).</p> <p><b>* In-section assignment</b></p>
Sept 23	<p>Symbolic meanings and social matrices</p> <p> Geertz, Clifford, “Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight,” pp. 412-453 in <i>The Interpretation of Cultures</i> (New York: Basic Books, 1983).</p> <p> Garcia Marquez, Gabriel, “No One Writes to the Colonel,” pp. 3-62 in <i>No One Writes to the Colonel and Other Short Stories</i>. Trans. by J. S. Bernstein (New York: Harper &amp; Row, 1968).</p>
Sep 25	<p>Entering the field and setting the scene</p> <p> Terry Williams, <i>Crackhouse: Notes from the End of the Line</i>, pp. 1-72.</p> <p><b>1st Short Paper Due</b></p>
Sept 30	<p>Ethnographic writing: reflexivity, positionality, and the crisis of representation</p> <p> Terry Williams, <i>Crackhouse</i>, pp. 73-143.</p> <p> James Clifford, “On Ethnographic Allegory,” pp. 98-121 in <i>Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography</i>. Ed. James Clifford George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).</p>
<b>Part III - Social structure, social ties, social identity</b>	
Oct 2	<p>The social as an object of study</p> <p> Emile Durkheim, “What is a Social Fact?” pp. 1-13 in <i>The Rules of the Sociological Method</i>. Ed. by Steven Lukes; trans. by W.D. Halls (New York: Free Press, 1982).</p>
Oct 7	<p>Structural functionalism and kinship</p> <p> Radcliffe-Brown, Alfred Reginald, “Introduction,” pp. 1-14 and “On Joking Relationships,” pp. 90-104 in <i>Structure and Function in Primitive Society</i> (New York: Free Press, 1952).</p>
Oct 9	<p>Kinship reconfigured</p> <p> Strathern, Marilyn, “Relatives Are Always a Surprise: Biotechnology in an Age of Individualism,” pp. 15-32 in <i>Kinship, Law and the Unexpected: Relatives Are Always a Surprise</i> (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).</p> <p> Eva, Tamsin, “Donor Siblings and a New Kind of Family,” <i>New York Times</i> blog Motherlode, July 1, 2012: <a href="http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/01/donor-siblings-and-a-new-kind-of-family/">http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/01/donor-siblings-and-a-new-kind-of-family/</a></p>

Oct 14	<p><i>Do ut des</i>: the bonds of reciprocity</p> <p> Douglas, Mary, "Forward," p. vii-xviii in <i>The Gift</i> (New York: W. W. Norton &amp; Company Inc., 1967).</p> <p> Mauss, Marcel, <i>The Gift</i>, pp. 1-46.</p>
Oct 16	<p>Reciprocity and gift-exchange continued</p> <p> Marcel Mauss, <i>The Gift</i>, pp. 47-83.</p> <p><b>* In-section assignment</b></p>
Oct 21	<p>Debt beyond the grave: reciprocity among living and dead</p> <p> Langford, Jean. 2009. "Gifts Intercepted: Biopolitics and Spirit Debt" <i>Cultural Anthropology</i> 24(4): 681-711.</p>
Oct 23	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
<b>Part IV - Belief systems and knowledge practices</b>	
Oct 28	<p> Durkheim, Emile, "Introduction," pp. 1-18 and "Definition of Religious Phenomena and Religion," Part III-IV, pp. 33-44 in <i>Elementary Forms of Religious Life</i>. Trans. by Karen Fields (New York: Free Press, 1995).</p>
Oct 30	<p> Douglas, Mary, "Introduction," pp. 1-7 and "Secular Defilement," pp. 36-50 in <i>Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo</i> (New York: Routledge, 2002 [1966]).</p> <p><b>* In-section assignment</b></p>
Nov 4	<p> Evans-Pritchard, E. E., <i>Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande</i>, pp. 1-64.</p>
Nov 6	<p> Evans-Prichard, <i>Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande</i>, pp. 120-163.</p> <p> <b>Film:</b> <i>Witchcraft among the Azande</i></p>
Nov 11	<p> Harding, Susan, "The Creation Museum," pp. 210-227 in <i>The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics</i> (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).</p> <p> Luhrman, Tanya, "Is That God Talking?" <i>New York Times</i>, May 1, 2013, <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/02/opinion/is-that-god-talking.html">www.nytimes.com/2013/05/02/opinion/is-that-god-talking.html</a></p>
Nov 13	<p> Cruikshank, Julie, <i>Do Glaciers Listen?: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination</i>, pp. 1-124</p>

Nov 18	 Cruikshank, <i>Do Glaciers Listen?</i> , pp. 127-210
Nov 20	 Cruikshank, <i>Do Glaciers Listen?</i> , pp. 213-259 <b>2nd Short Paper Due</b>
<b>Coda: a case study in culture, conflict, and repair</b>	
Nov 27	 Drakulić, Slavenka, “One Day in the Life of Dražen Erdemović,” pp. 106-120 in <i>They Would Never Hurt a Fly: War Criminals on Trial in The Hague</i> (New York: Viking, 2004).   <b>Film:</b> <i>We Are All Neighbors</i>
Nov 29	No class / Thanksgiving
Dec 2	 Anders Stefansson, “Coffee after Cleansing? Co-existence, Co-operation, and Communication in Post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina,” <i>Focaal</i> 57 (2010): 62–76  Lara Nettelfield and Sarah Wagner, Selection from “The Politics and Practice of Homecoming: Refugee Return,” in <i>Srebrenica in the Aftermath of Genocide</i> (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
Dec 4	Final reflections and review

**\*\*\* FINAL EXAM \*\*\***

**The exam will be held on Wednesday, December 11th, 10:20-12:30 in Room 1957 E. St.**