

**INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOCULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**  
**Anthropology 1002 (Distance Education)**  
**Summer 2011**  
**Professor Barbara Miller**

**PURPOSE OF THE COURSE:**

This course provides a broad perspective on world cultures within the context of contemporary change. We examine similarities and differences in human behavior and beliefs across a range of cultures. Important themes in cultural anthropology are considered throughout the course: cultural relativism, how to study culture, theoretical approaches to culture, variation within cultures, systems of social inequality, how and why cultures change, and the role of cultural anthropology in global affairs, policy and problem-solving.

*Learning objectives* include:

- Knowledge of how culture has evolved, varies in patterned ways worldwide, and is changing through globalization.
- Understanding of intra-cultural differences based on class, ethnicity, gender, and other factors.
- Ability to apply critical thinking skills to course material through Discussion Board.
- Acquisition of key concepts in cultural anthropology and their strengths and limitations.
- Practice of analytical skills in comparing objectives and representation of three sources in the term paper.
- Improvement of writing through draft submission of term paper.
- Awareness of links between cultural anthropology and other fields of anthropology and other disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and professional fields such as international affairs, business, engineering, and policy.

*Learning assessment* includes:

- Two exams with questions that probe acquisition of both substance and analytical/critical thinking abilities.
- Discussion Board participation to demonstrate critical thinking and ability to perceive links between anthropology and other areas.
- Term paper that demonstrates analytical insights through focused comparison of three sources and writing ability.

**REQUIRED BOOKS:**

Barbara D. Miller, *Cultural Anthropology in a Globalizing World* (3rd edition, 2010).  
James Spradley and David W. McCurdy, eds., *Conformity and Conflict for Miller (C&C)* (2008)  
Elizabeth Thomas, *The Old Way: A Story of the First People* (2006)  
Glynn Cochrane, *Festival Elephants and the Myth of Global Poverty* (2008)

**REQUIRED TAPED LECTURES AND OTHER RESOURCES:**

Taped materials are available through Blackboard:

- 15 class lectures
- 4 faculty interviews
- 3 CIGA Seminars
- 1 ethnographic play
- 3 films: *The Fast Runner*, *Masai Women*, *The Kawelka: Ongka's Big Moka*

### **EXPECTATIONS:**

- ▶ Do all assigned readings in a timely fashion.
- ▶ View all class lectures, faculty interviews, CIGA seminars, ethnographic play and ethnographic films.
- ▶ You must take the exams on time and hand the paper in on time. The only way to get an extension on the paper or to take a make-up exam is to provide the professor with a valid excuse in writing (from a professional) for a medical or family emergency. NOTE: A late paper will be graded down a fraction of a grade (for example, from an A to an A-) each day (24 hour period) that it is late unless the student provides a valid excuse to me in writing.

### **ASSESSMENTS:**

- ▶ Mid-term exam: short-answer and essay questions (30 percent of the grade) on the first half of the course; open book, 1 hour, honors system [the exam will be open for 24 hours].
- ▶ Term paper described on last page of syllabus (20 percent of the grade); submit on Blackboard.
- ▶ Final exam: short-answer and essay questions on second half of course (30 percent of the grade); open book, 1 hours, honors system [the exam will be open for 24 hours]; submit on Blackboard.
- ▶ Regular and thoughtful participation in discussion on Blackboard (20 percent of the final grade). For 100 percent in this area, you must post 10 substantive comments with a maximum of 10 points for each solid post (not including your personal introduction!). Timing: optimally, you are posting roughly twice a week on the topics under consideration for that week. I will make some allowances for uneven timing. Nonetheless: you must have at least 5 solid points by the end of week 3. In other words, more than five posts in the second half of the course (weeks 4, 5, and 6) will not count toward your discussion grade.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

- ▶ Adherence to honesty on all exams and assignments is absolutely essential.
- ▶ Answers on both exams must be drawn from course material, and not from outside sources such as the Internet; answers drawing on non-class material will receive a zero.
- ▶ In writing your paper, you must again draw only on in-class resources and your own analytical/critical thinking about the three sources under consideration.
- ▶ See also the GW Code of Academic Integrity: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

### **GW SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS:**

- ▶ Disability Support Services (DSS): Marvin Center 242, telephone 994-8250;  
<http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss>
- ▶ University Counselling Center (UCC), 202-994-5300  
[http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/Counseling Services](http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/Counseling%20Services)

### **TIPS FOR SUCCESS:**

- ▶ Cultural anthropology is a reading-intensive subject, but the reading is interesting and not particularly difficult. Please keep up and do not let assignments accumulate!
- ▶ I will provide a "Viewers' Guide" on Blackboard for the three ethnographic films. Please use it!
- ▶ Discussion of course material through Blackboard will be ongoing throughout the course. Please participate regularly and thoughtfully! Participation in discussion counts for 20 percent of your final grade and it will provide "testable material" that will appear on the two exams.

### **GRADING PHILOSOPHY:**

▶ I reward improvement over the course in terms of achievement . Thus, if you get a poor grade on the mid-term, and excellent grades on the paper and the final, and you are doing an excellent job in the discussions, your grade could well be an “A.” In other words, I will take into account a pattern of progress in determining the final grade, rather than using straight mathematical averaging of grades.

▶ Almost everyone who takes this class ends up doing well in terms of their overall learning achievements and as reflected in their final grade.

### **Note:**

▶ Items in bold type below will be available to you through Blackboard and iTunes.

▶ “AL” stands for “Anthropology Lecture.”

▶ Some of the Anthropology Lectures, Faculty Interviews and CIGA Seminars are not as long in duration as it says at the beginning of the taped material because of subsequent editing.

▶ Blackboard discussion topics will be posted at the beginning of the week; you should address that issue by the end of the week (midnight Sunday) in order to earn points.

### **Week 1, May 16-20:**

#### **Introducing Anthropology, Culture, and the Study of Culture**

##### VIEWING

**AL1**, Introduction to the Course and to Anthropology

**AL2**, Cultural Anthropology: The Study of Culture

**AL3**, Methods in Cultural Anthropology

**Interview** with Professor Wood

**Interview** with Professor Brooks

##### READING:

Miller, Chapters 1 and 2

C&C Chapters 1 and 2

BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION ONGOING

### **Week 2, May 23-May 27:**

#### **Economic Systems, Reproduction and Human Development**

##### VIEWING

**AL 4**, Economic Systems

**AL 5**, Reproduction

**AL6**, Personality and Human Development

Ethnographic film: *The Fast Runner* (viewers beware: this film contains some brief violent and sexual scenes)

Ethnographic film: *Masai Women*

Start reading Thomas

##### READING:

Miller, Chapters 3 and 4

C&C Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6

BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION ONGOING

### **Week 3, May 30-June 3: Health and Family Life**

#### VIEWING

AL7, Medical Anthropology

AL 8, Kinship and Domestic Life

#### READING:

Miller, Chapter 5 and, 6

C&C Chapters 7 and 8

Finish reading Thomas

#### BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION ONGOING

REVIEW for mid-term exam

#### **\*6/3 MID-TERM EXAM\***

The exam will be open for 24 hours starting at 5pm Friday. The exam must be submitted no later than 6pm Saturday. Post it on Blackboard per instructions \*and\* email it to the professor (barbar@gwu.edu) as "insurance." A late exam will not be accepted without a valid excuse documented in writing by a professional.

### **Week 4, June 6-June 10: Social Groups, Politics and Communication**

#### VIEWING

AL9, Social Groups and Social Stratification

AL 10, Politics and Social Order

AL11, Communication

CIGA Seminar, Professor Hugh Gusterson

Interview with Professor Kuipers

Ethnographic film: *The Kawelka: Ongka's Big Moka*

#### READING:

Miller, Chapter 7, 8 and 9

C&C Chapters 9, 10, 11 and 12

Start reading Cochrane

#### BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION ONGOING

### **Week 5, June 13-17: Religion and Expressive Culture**

#### VIEWING

AL12, Religion

AL 13, Expressive Culture

Interview with Professor Catherine Allen

Play, *Condor Qatay* (2 hours)

#### READING:

Miller, Chapter 10 and 11

C&C Chapters 13 and 14  
Continue reading Cochrane

BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION ONGOING

### **Week 6, June 20-June 25: Cultural Change**

#### **\*6/20 PAPER DUE at 5pm Washington DC time\***

Post your paper on Blackboard. Remember that there is a penalty for late submission, and a paper handed in even at 5:01pm will be counted as one day late. So make sure you turn it in EARLY to avoid losing points!

#### VIEWING

AL 14, Migration

AL 15, Development and Change

CIGA Seminar, Dr. Lynn Bennett

#### READING:

Miller, Chapter 12 and 13

C&C Chapters 15 and 16

Finish reading Cochrane

REVIEW for final exam

BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION ONGOING

**\*6/24-25 FINAL EXAM\* (covers Weeks 3-6)** The exam will be open for 24 hours starting at 5pm on Friday June \*24\*; it must be posted on Blackboard no later than 6pm Saturday, June \*25\*. Post your exam on Blackboard per instructions (there should be no need for the back-up plan of emailing your exam to me, since you should all be adept at posting assignments on Blackboard by now). A late exam will not be accepted.

## **THE PAPER**

Paper Topic: A Cultural Comparison

For this paper, you are asked to compare the different anthropological approaches and findings used in three sources: *The Old Way: A Story of the First People*, *Festival Elephants*, and the play, *Condor Qatay* (the taped ethnographic play by Allen)

Your analytical comparison must include attention to (a) what each author's objectives are and (b) the mode of representation that the author uses to convey her/his points (case study, comparative, fieldwork based, etc.) Beyond that minimum, you must draw on insights from this class and think creatively of a theme that links the three works as well as dissonances across the three sources. If you do not use concepts and insights from this class in your essay, you will not get a passing grade.

The paper should be 1000 words long. I will likely consider a shorter paper to be skimpy; a longer paper is likely to indicate a lack of careful editing. In the case of papers over the word limit, I will read and grade only the first 1000 words or so.

The paper is quite short. Therefore you must take extra care to use the allotted space to make good, solid, creative points about the two cultures--no fluff!

I am happy to read a draft of your paper in advance of the due date—but you must give me sufficient lead time for doing so. If you think you will need this kind of assistance, contact me about it by email, and submit a solid draft to me NO LATER than 5pm DC time on Wednesday, June 15th. The more advanced your draft is, the more my comments can help you. I cannot respond to an outline.

NOTE: you will need to pre-view the play, *Condor Qatay*, before the assigned date in order to have time to think about its content in relation to your paper.

### **Other details about the paper:**

1. The paper must be double-spaced, in 12 point font size, paginated, and with at least 1" margins around the text for comments.
2. Follow closely the professor's "20+ Writing Tips" for overall composition, effectiveness of your writing, and grammar (I will post these tips on Blackboard well in advance of the paper deadline).
3. Keep a file of your drafts and final version as back-up. The professor is not responsible for lost papers.
4. Proofread the paper carefully—your computer's spell check is not always right!
5. The only valid excuse for a late paper is a personal medical or family crisis. Any such excuse must be documented on paper and given to the professor. Problems with computers are not a valid excuse for late papers or late exams. The surest way to avoid a late paper due to a crisis is writing it well in advance of the deadline!
6. Submit your paper on Blackboard per instructions that I will send you. To be on the safe side, submit it in advance of the deadline. I will send you a confirmation of receipt by email.
7. Think about your argument, write with conviction, and, of course, provide an engaging title for your paper!
8. Provide a word count at the end of the paper.
9. List of references: if you refer only to the three sources, then you do not need to provide a list of references, since it will be clear to me what sources you are talking about. If, however, you want to cite something from class lectures, the textbook or C&C, or a comment from a classmate on Blackboard, then please cite them and list them as sources. So, Thomas, Cochrane and the play don't need to be in a biblio/references cited list at the end of your paper. I hope this is clear. If not, email me.