Anthropology affords me intellectual satisfaction: as a form of history, linking up at opposite ends with world history and my own history, it thus reveals the rationale common to both. In proposing the study of mankind, anthropology frees me from doubt, since it examines those differences and changes in mankind which have a meaning for all men, and excludes those peculiar to a single civilization which dissolve into nothingness under the gaze of the outside observer. Lastly, it appeases that restless and destructive appetite I have already referred to, by ensuring me a virtually inexhaustible supply of material, thanks to the diversity of manners, customs and institutions. It allows me to reconcile my character with my life.” - Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*

Course Description
This is a course on the history of anthropological thought from the mid-nineteenth century until the present. It explores how anthropology as a discipline has changed over time—from the construction of its subject matter to the ideas and social theory shaping its inquiry and methods. In tracing the influence of three national traditions (American, British, and French), we will map a genealogy of scholarship across individual anthropologists and schools of research. We will also tie these developments and key figures to wider historical forces (colonialism, industrialization, the rise of capitalism, world wars, nationalism, migration, etc.), examining how anthropological research and knowledge connect to the world outside academia.

Student Learning Outcomes
As a result of completing this course, students will be able to:
1. Identify the foundational schools of thought within the discipline of anthropology.
2. Explain key concepts associated with these schools of thought or theoretical models.
3. Outline the trajectory of anthropology’s treatment of “culture” and “society,” as it relates to different strands of social and political theory.
4. Evaluate an abstract argument for its structure and thesis.
5. Apply the theoretical model learned to a given cultural practice or social group.
Course Requirements and Grading Criteria
Grades are based on the following components:
- Written assignments (25%)
- Participation (10%)
- Discussion section (10%)
- Midterm exam (25%)
- Final essay (30%)

Written assignments: There will be several written assignments, both short essay assignments and in-class exercises on material covered in the lecture. Please note that there are no make-up written assignments without official documentation of an excused absence (see below). You are responsible for obtaining from your classmates all material covered during any missed class.

One written assignment (on early anthropology and representing difference) will involve peer review. Each student will review another student's paper and will provide substantive comments. Students will then submit both copies of the original draft (with reviewer comments) and a final revised draft.

Participation: The class participation grade is based on participation in lecture discussions and attendance. After three missed classes, the participation grade will be lowered a half grade with each additional absence. Excused absences require official documentation, e.g., a note from your physician. In accordance with university policy, please notify me during the first week of the semester if you will be absent from class on a day (or days) of religious observance.

Discussion section: This grade will be based on participation, attendance, and the occasional in-section exercise. As with lecture, excused absences require official documentation.

Midterm exam: Covering material from the assigned reading, lectures, films, and class discussion, the midterm exam will consist of definitions, short-answer questions, and an essay integrating textual analysis. As with the written assignments, you cannot make up an exam except in the case of an emergency, which, as noted above, requires official documentation.

Final essay: The final essay will be a similar to a take-home written exam, responding to a prompt (you will choose one essay question from among several posed). This will be a peer-reviewed exercise. Detailed instructions will be provided on November 22, and the essay is due on December 13.

Course Texts
Claude Lévi-Strauss, Tristes Tropiques (New York: Penguin, 1992)

All other readings will be posted in weekly folders on Blackboard. They are marked in the course schedule below with a [B].
Additional Course Information

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 instructors. You should also consult the university’s academic integrity policy, which states that “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: https://studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity.

In this course if you commit a breach of academic integrity on 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.

Support for Students outside the Classroom
Disability Support Services (DSS)
Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/

Mental Health Services (UCC) 202-994-5300
The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students’ personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:
  – crisis and emergency mental health consultations
  – confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
    https://counselingcenter.gwu.edu/

Course Schedule

Part One: Anthropology’s origins
Tu 8/30 – Introduction: genealogies of thought, and how to read theory

Th 9/1 – Evolutionary theory and its anthropological turn
  ◦ Charles Darwin, excerpts from Chapter IV, “Circumstances favorable to natural selection,” pp. 101-109 and “Summary of the chapter,” pp. 126-130 in On the Origins of Species (1859); the original text can be found at: http://darwin-online.org.uk/ [B]
(Th 9/1 cont.)


Tu 9/6 – Victorian anthropology’s object of study; cultural evolutionism

  * Written exercise on reading theory due

Th 9/8 – The “science” of measuring and mapping racial difference


Film: Life and Times of Sara Baartman: “The Hottentot Venus” (53 min).


Part Two: The emergence of the culture concept in American anthropology

Tu 9/13 – Boas’ critique of cultural evolutionism

[Guest lecturer - Dr. Richard Grinker]


Th 9/15 – American expansionism and the triumph of man over nature: the American Museum of Natural History

- Rudyard Kipling’s “White Man’s Burden” [B]
  * Written exercise (essay) on early anthropology and representing difference: DRAFT DUE FOR PEER REVIEW

Tu 9/20 – Mead’s study of Samoan adolescence

- Margaret Mead, Coming of Age in Samoa [1928], Chapters I, VI, VII, and Appendix II (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001). [B]
(Tu 9/20 cont.)

* PEER REVIEW DUE of written exercise on early anthropology and representing difference

Th 9/22 – Boasian culture continued

* FINAL DRAFT DUE of written exercise on early anthropology and representing difference

Part Three: Functionalist anthropology from across the pond
Tu 9/27 – Preface: Durkheim and the study of society

Th 9/29 – Malinowski: Method and theory

Tu 10/4 – Do ut des: the social bonds of reciprocity

Th 10/6 – Radcliffe-Brown and the concept of structure

* Written exercise on The Gift

Tu 10/11 – Structural functionalism: Evans-Pritchard’s segmentary lineage system

Th 10/13 – EP continued

Tu 10/18 – Midterm exam

Part Four: The problem of mind and meaning
Th 10/20 – Weber and the historical force of ideas
Tu 10/25 – No class (Fall break)

Th 10/27 – Lévi-Strauss and structuralist theory
* Written exercise on Weber

Th 11/1 – Lévi-Strauss continued
* Written exercise on Tristes Tropiques

Th 11/3 – Cultural order, structure, and ritual symbols

Part Five: A glimpse of anthropology deconstructed; critical theory applied
Tu 11/8 – Marx

Th 11/10 – Modes of production
* Final essay instructions handed out

Tu 11/15 – Gender, culture, knowledge examined
[Guest lecturer: Dr. Attiya Ahmad]
(Tu 11/15 cont.)


Th 11/17 – Gender continued: identity ascribed, resisted, performed

Film: Paris Is Burning (53 min).

Tu 11/22 – On resistance


* DRAFT of final essay due for peer review

Th 11/24 – No class (Thanksgiving)

Tu 11/29 – Power/knowledge/subjectivity - the contributions of Michel Foucault


* PEER REVIEW of final essay due

Th 12/1 – Biopower and bare life


* In-class written exercise on Foucault

Tu 12/6 – Practice and performance


Th 12/8 – Final review and wrap up

The final essay is due on Tuesday, December 13 by 12:00 pm.