

INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOCULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropology 002.10, Fall 2010

Professor: Barbara Miller

Office hours: Wednesday 3:30-5:00pm, 1957 E Street NW, suite 401

- ▶ or make an appointment for some other time by contacting my assistant, Stacy Groff
(Email: sdgroff@gwu.edu; tel: 994-0885)

Teaching Assistants:

Jessica Grebeldinger, Stephanie Harris, Julia Friederich, Jacqueline Hazen, Casey McHugh
TA telephone: 994-4969; TA office: 2110 G Street NW, room B-02 (lower level)

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE:

This course examines contemporary world cultures and how they are changing. We cover important topics in cultural anthropology including: the origins of human culture, cultural relativism, how to study culture, theoretical approaches to culture, variation within and across cultures, systems of social inequality, how and why cultures change, and the role of cultural anthropology in global affairs, policy and problem-solving.

REQUIRED BOOKS (you are required to read these books but you are not required to buy them; copies are ordered at the GW Bookstore and on 2-hour reserve in Gelman Library):

Barbara D. Miller, *Cultural Anthropology* (Pearson, 5th edition, 2009).

James Spradley and David W. McCurdy, eds., *Conformity and Conflict* ["C&C"] (2008, special edition to accompany Miller, *Cultural Anthropology*).

Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, *The Old Way: A Story of the First People* (Picador, 2006).

Philippe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio* (Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition, 2003).

Glynn Cochrane, *Festival Elephants and the Myth of Global Poverty* (Pearson, 2009).

Learning objectives:

- Knowledge of how culture has evolved, how it varies in patterned ways in the contemporary world, and how globalization is affecting local and regional cultures.
- Acquisition of key concepts and theories in cultural anthropology and awareness of their strengths and limitations.
- Insight into intra-cultural differences based on class, ethnicity, gender, and other factors.
- Awareness of links between anthropology and other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and in professional fields such as international affairs, business, global health, and engineering.
- Ability to apply critical thinking skills to course material orally in discussion sections and through Blackboard.
- Enhancement of research skills, including reflexivity, and awareness of Academic Integrity principles through the term paper.
- Improved analytical writing through the paper assignment, TA mentoring about writing in discussion section and submission of draft version of term paper for review and revision.

Learning assessment:

▶ "Continuous assessment" exams: three in-class exams comprising multiple-choice questions (20 percent of the grade each for a total of 60 percent of the overall grade). NOTE: exams must be taken on the date and time noted on this syllabus.

▶ Paper: described on last page of syllabus (20 percent of the overall grade). NOTE: handing in the paper on time is very important. A late paper will be graded down a fraction of a grade (for example,

from an A to an A-) for each day that it is late (a “day” equals 24 hours from the time the paper is due).

► Discussion section: attendance and participation in discussion section meetings; quizzes; any special projects assigned; Blackboard participation, etc. Your TA will provide you with details about how your discussion section grade is calculated. (20 percent of the overall grade).

CLASS POLICIES:

Attendance: attending all lectures and discussion sections is a primary component leading to excellence in this course.

Problems with deadlines: The only valid excuse for missing an exam or being late on the paper or any other assignments is a personal medical or family emergency (please refer to your discussion section syllabus for specific guidelines about missing section). Students must contact their TA and present an excuse **in writing from a professional** in order to be allowed an extension for an exam or the paper in order to avoid penalties. Computer failure, travel plans, and work are not acceptable excuses.

Religious holidays: the University’s Religious Holiday Calendar is posted on Blackboard under “Announcements.” If you intend to be absent from class because of religious observance, you must inform your TA (not the professor) of the date or dates **in writing no later than Friday, September 10.**

Electronics: during lectures and discussion sections, it is expected that you will be fully engaged in the class and not using electronic devices to chat, text, or browse the Internet. Students who habitually use electronic devices for purposes other than note-taking in lecture or discussion section will be asked to leave the lecture or section.

In case of an emergency situation, all policies stated in this syllabus are subject to revision per emerging GW guidelines.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Honesty and original work on all exams and assignments are absolutely essential, and dishonesty will not be tolerated. Students are expected to be aware of what constitutes academic integrity in every aspect of this class. We will also discuss academic integrity in lectures and sections and provide a list of tips.

This course follows the standards set forth in the GW Code of Academic Integrity and its definition of cheating: <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 Counseling Center (UCC), 202-994-5300
http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/Counseling_Services

CLASSROOM EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS:

Information will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in sections.

PART I. CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS:

ORIGINS. MAKING A LIVING & MAKING PEOPLE

► Note: readings listed under a particular week should be done *before* that week!

Week 1

8/31 Introduction to the Course and to Anthropology

9/2 Cultural Anthropology: The Study of Culture

*READING: Miller, Chapter 1

C&C Ch 1, "Anthropology and the Study of Culture"

Week 2

9/7 The Origins of Culture

9/9 Case Study Film on culture and change: *Trekking on Tradition* (45 minutes)

*READING: Miller, Chapter 2

Start reading *The Old Way*, front matter through Ch 7

Week 3

9/14 Methods in Cultural Anthropology & short film *How Cultures Are Studied* (20 minutes)

9/16 Economic Systems: Making a Living

*READING: Miller, Chapters 3 and 4

C&C Ch 2, "Eating Christmas in the Kalahari"

C&C, Ch 4, "Men's Pleasure, Women's Labor: Tourism for Sex"

Continue reading *The Old Way*, Ch 8-13

Week 4

9/21 Economic Systems: Consumption and Exchange

9/23 Making People and the Human Life Cycle

*READING: Miller, Chapters 5 and 6

C&C, Ch 5, "Mother's Love: Death without Weeping"

Continue reading *The Old Way*, Ch 14-20

Week 5

9/28 Case Study Film on the life cycle: *Maasai Women* (59 minutes)

READING: C&C, Ch 6, "A Woman's Curse"

REVIEW FOR EXAM 1

9/30 **EXAM 1: please bring at least one #2 pencil with you to class**

PART II. THE LIFE OF CULTURE: HEALTH, GROUPS, AND POWER

Week 6

10/5 Health, Illness, and Healing

10/7 Kinship Systems

*READING: Miller, Chapters 7 and 8

C&C, Ch 7, "Medical Anthropology: Improving Nutrition in Malawi"

C&C, Ch 8, "Life without Fathers or Husbands"

Start reading *In Search of Respect*, front matter through Ch 4

Week 7

10/12 Case Study Film on family life: *Dadi's Family* (59 minutes)

10/14 Social Groups and Social Stratification

- *READING: Miller, Chapter 9
C&C, Ch 9, "Mixed Blood"
Continue reading *In Search of Respect*, Ch 5-7
- *Optional short film (12 minutes) available through streaming video: *Salamanders: A Night at the Phi Delt House*

Week 8

- 10/19 Politics and Leadership
- 10/21 Case Study Film on politics: *The Kavelka: Ongka's Big Moka* (59 minutes)
- *READING: Miller, Chapter 10
C&C, Ch 10, "Life without Chiefs"
Finish reading *In Search of Respect*, Ch 8-9 and Epilogues

Week 9

- 10/26 Social Order and Social Conflict
DEADLINE for submitting your draft paper for TA review is 10/26 midnight
- 10/28 Case Study Film on conflict: *Africa: War Is Business*
- READING: Miller, Chapter 11
C&C, Ch 11, "Notes from an Expert Witness"
REVIEW FOR EXAM 2

Week 10

11/2 EXAM 2: please bring at least one #2 pencil with you to class

PART III: THE WORK OF SYMBOLS: COMMUNICATION, RELIGION, AND ART

Week 10 (continued)

- 11/4 Communication
- *READING: Miller, Chapter 12
C&C Ch 12, "The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis Shaped by Words"

Week 11

- 11/9 Case Study Film on religion: "*Days of the Dead: A Living Tradition*"
- ***PAPER DEADLINE is 11/9 at 2:20pm in two formats: post on Blackboard through SafeAssign and bring a hard copy to class. The penalty for late submission is described on pg. 1; a paper posted and/or handed in after 2:20pm is late...even at 2:25pm! Both formats of the paper must be submitted on time to avoid the penalty!***
- 11/11 Culture and the Supernatural World
- *READING: Miller, Chapter 13
C&C Ch 13, "Baseball Magic"
Start reading *Festival Elephants*, Ch 1-3

Week 12

- 11/16 Expressive Culture
- *READING: Miller, Chapters 14
C&C Ch 14, "Japanese Hip-Hop and the Globalization of Popular Culture"
- *Required Case Study Film on expressive culture and change: *Trobriand Cricket* (50 minutes) available through streaming video for viewing *outside* class on your own time

PART IV: TWO FORCES OF CHANGE: MIGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Week 12 (continued)

- 11/18 Migration: People on the Move
*READING: Miller, Chapters 14 and 15
Finish reading *Festival Elephants*, Ch 4-7
C&C Ch 15, “The Road to Refugee Resettlement”

Week 13

- 11/23 Case Study Film on indigenous people and development: *The Kayapo: Out of the Forest* (53 minutes)

THANKSGIVING VACATION—NO CLASS: remember those who lived here first

Week 14

- 11/30 Culture and International Development
*READING: Miller, chapter 16
C&C Ch 16, “Forest Development the Indian Way”
12/2 Special Event: Cotlow Presentations by GW Student Researchers

Week 15

- 12/7 Make-up day: NO CLASS unless needed
12/9 EXAM 3: please bring at least one #2 pencil with you
NOTE: there is no exam during the final exam period

Term Paper Assignment: two options

Topic 1: A Comparison of Kinship and Family Life in Two Cultures

In this paper, you will discuss and compare your own kinship system and family life with that in either *The Old Way* or *In Search of Respect*.

Data collection: For the section of the paper about you, you should collect data for and prepare a kinship diagram as described in the textbook and in discussion sections. Remember: this is a kinship diagram, not a genealogy. It is based only on your memory of who your relatives are. For this “auto-ethnography,” you may find it helpful to pretend to interview yourself: design a set of questions for yourself and then answer them, taking notes on the answers just as if you were in the field interviewing a stranger.

Analysis, description, and interpretation: In your paper, you should describe your family membership and structure using concepts learned in class. Then describe how you and your relatives interact in daily life, or seasonally, or whatever you wish to discuss that makes sense for your family. You might pay attention to who currently resides together, who are “closest” and what that means, and what various relatives expect of you in terms of behavior and emotional connections. Are pets considered part of the family?

Then, to the extent that you can, with the information drawn from your chosen class ethnography, provide a comparative/analytical discussion of key aspects of kinship (you do not need to draw a kinship diagram for the San or the El Barrio people, however). Other than reflective research about your own kin and family dynamics and careful reading of the ethnography, no further research is required for the paper.

The kinship diagram must be submitted at the same time as the paper, preferably stapled to it. Cite either the Thomas or Bourgois ethnography at the end of your paper as a reference.

Topic 2: Food and Beverages in My Life, An Auto-Ethnographic Research Project

In this project, you will first collect data on your consumption of food and beverages and then analyze, describe, and interpret your findings. You must submit a copy of your journal with the paper.

Data collection: Maintain a detailed personal journal of all the foods you eat and beverages you drink over a continuous one-week (7-day) period. Choose an ordinary week that does not include unusual consumption events such as holiday feasts or Halloween. Note the foods/beverages and amounts (in so far as you can tell), the time of consumption, what activity or activities accompanied the consumption, and the social context and kinds of social interactions if any. The journal thus includes lists of items consumed and notes on the context. Write down in your journal the date and time when you recorded the data, in so far as is reasonable. For the best data collection, it's important to record data *as soon as possible,* preferably right after the event, because you are likely to forget details if you wait even until later the same day. If you forget to make journal entries until the next day, note that as well since it means your data may be affected by what is called "recall bias." It is okay to include "remembered data," just be sure to record that fact.

Analysis, description, and interpretation: The goal of this paper is to prompt you to think about how your microculture(s) shape(s) your food and beverage consumption patterns including what you eat and drink, where, and with whom (along with other factors that may appear important). Make sure you go beyond sheer description of your findings to provide interpretation of the cultural shaping of your behavior and the meanings of your consumption patterns. In order for this project to be successful, you first must have data in hand and second you must have time to ponder it. So be sure to avoid letting your data collection lag until too late.

Last, your paper should include a section comparing your findings about your consumption patterns with relevant material from *The Old Way*.

GENERAL NOTES ON THE PAPER: Specific guidelines and writing tips will be discussed in sections:

1. Length: between 1000-1250 words, double-spaced, font size 12; no extra space between paragraphs. A shorter paper is likely to be considered skimpy; a longer paper indicates a lack of careful editing.
2. Your paper should have a title, a clear introduction, solid descriptive material, and insightful comparative, analytical comments. It should draw on concepts from Anth 2.
3. Your TA is willing to meet with you to discuss the paper and review drafts in order to help improve the content and your writing. If you need more extensive assistance with your paper, please contact the GW Writing Center for an appointment.
4. Proofread the paper carefully—your computer's spell check is not always right!
5. Be sure to save a copy of your paper as back-up. The teaching staff is not responsible for lost papers. It is also wise to keep file copies of draft versions of the paper, just in case your final version gets lost.
6. The only valid excuses for a late paper are medical and family emergencies. Any such excuse must be documented in writing, by a professional, and given to your TA. Problems with computers are never a valid excuse for late papers. Given ever-present possibility of sickness or other problems, you are strongly advised to start working on your paper well ahead of the due date.
7. The surest way to avoid a late paper is to write it well in advance of the deadline!
8. Keep in mind GW guidelines about Academic Honesty. Plagiarism in written work and any kind of dishonesty related to exams and quizzes will not be tolerated. Your TA will give you clear guidelines, in discussion section, about how to cite sources in your paper.