

Introduction to Anthropology

AN 109 Fall 2020

W/F 1:30-3pm

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Office Hours: Thursdays 11am-1pm via Zoom

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Course Description

This course introduces students to key concepts and methods of cultural anthropology. Anthropology (anthropos = human; logos = study of) explores human life in all of its complexity. In this course, we are most interested in understanding how an individual's actions are shaped by the norms of their society. The central object of our study—the culture concept—will be a point of departure for examining a range of challenges we face as social beings in the contemporary world, especially as they relate to difference and inequality. In sum, students will: (1) learn that all societies—including their own—arbitrarily define certain (and highly divergent) forms of behavior and thought as “natural” and “moral;” (2) become familiar with fieldwork as a method which offers unique insights into the different ways people make meaning in their daily life, (3) gain insight into the ethical implications of the discipline in the past, present and future.

Required Course Texts

Delaney, Carol. 2011. *Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell Press. (ISBN: 978-1118868621)

Mares, T.M. 2019. *Life on the Other Border: Farmworkers and Food Justice in Vermont*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (ISBN: 978-0-520-29573-5)

LeGuin, Ursula. 2017. *The Dispossessed*. Harper Perennial, 9780062421074

Recommended Texts

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010)

These books are available for purchase at the St Michael's College bookstore, and through IndieBound online purveyors. A number of articles also are required for the course, which can be obtained electronically; you will need to use different access methods to get them, including Canvas, E-Journals in the Library catalog, and the St. Michael's-licensed digital journal archive JSTOR (www.jstor.org). Notes on the syllabus indicate how you can obtain each reading. In Canvas, you can access course readings by clicking on "course reserves" in the left-hand menu.

Format: This course is mixture of lecture, active learning exercises and discussion. Class attendance is mandatory. While we will discuss each reading in class, we will rarely have time to consider all issues raised by the course readings. You will, however, be responsible for all course material on the exams. If you are having trouble with the amount of material or the pace of the course, I encourage you to see me in office hours to discuss strategies for managing the workload.

Reading Schedule: We will follow the syllabus as closely as possible, but changes to the schedule are possible, especially given the emergent nature of needs around coronavirus. Please be mindful of this and listen closely for updates mentioned in class or periodically check the course announcement page on Canvas.

Classroom conduct: The classroom is a space for learning. Participating in class exercises and discussions is crucial to the learning process and counts towards your final grade. To facilitate a vibrant and respectful classroom environment, I ask that you refrain from all side conversations and multi-tasking. Computer use in the classroom will be strictly limited to those who have pre-established special accommodations at the University. Please put away your cell phones before entering the classroom, even if class is not yet in session to facilitate a faster and smoother start time each day.

Getting Help: First, try the syllabus! Given the size of the course, I have tried to answer as many questions as possible here. If you still need assistance, the best way to communicate with me outside of class is via email or during my regular office hours Thursdays 11am-1pm. When we are approaching an exam or paper, you should email me to reserve a time-slot so you don't get stuck in line waiting.

Requirements, Expectations, and Grading

Requirements

1. Attendance in Class Meetings
2. Engaged Participation
3. Work submitted on time. There are penalties for lateness; see below.
4. Clear communication with classmates and professor

Expectations

1. Come to each class having read all assigned materials.
2. Write summative notes on each source. This will make studying easier. Keep track of keywords, points of clarification or questions, or vocabulary words that you may be unfamiliar with.
3. Have an open mind. Learning to interrogate your own lifeworld, the invisible webs of meaning you (and your loved ones, the media, etc. etc.) have spun around you, is not easy without some flexibility and willingness to question.

Grading

This course is grounded in *self-accountable, participatory learning*. This means that you hold yourselves accountable for the work you need to do, that you support your classmates in holding themselves accountable, and that we all trust each other to do our best work, and show up meaningfully to this learning community in the best way we can, throughout the semester.

An outgrowth of this orientation to learning is that *no formal grades will be assigned* prior to the last weeks of class. **We will have opportunities for ongoing self, peer, and instructor assessments that will help you understand where you are succeeding and where you are being challenged in the course.** These include two shorter course papers, when you will write, revise, reflect on, and review your own work at the end of the first and second course themes. You will know where you stand in terms of successful completion of the class. Rather than assigning grades to all work, though, I will collaborate with you to do thorough, honest, and careful self-assessments along the way.

Attendance and Participation: Thoughtful participation includes “stepping up and stepping back,” using the “I” perspective instead of making generalization, asking questions, refraining from texting and googling during lecture, and engaging your peers in active learning exercises and small group discussions. Each week, several students will take group notes on a rotating basis in the shared class notes file—participation in this activity at some point in the semester is also required, and accommodations are available for different learning styles. Thoughtful, accountable participation also includes early arrival to class to give yourself time to settle in to the video participation format and “land” in the “room” with all of us.

Weekly Reflections and Discussion Leaders: Wednesday classes will open with an opportunity for written personal reflection on the course materials for the week. Save all of these reflections, and you will periodically be invited to turn them in with any further

comments or thoughts you have. Friday classes include the guidance of 2-3 student discussion leaders who are responsible for offering a brief overview of the materials for the day, as well as developing key questions for discussion. All students will help lead discussion at least once during the semester.

Cultural Analysis Papers: There will be two short papers due on October 9th and November 13th respectively. There are two key dimensions of an anthropological perspective you will work on in these assignments: the ability to reflect critically on personal experience and to explain how the most “common-sensical” ideas or practices are culturally shaped. Each paper should be a balance of thick description and insightful analysis. Full assignment descriptions will be distributed two weeks’ ahead of deadline.

Final Exam: The assignment for the final exam will be handed out one month before the exam is due. You have two choices for the format of the exam: a formal term paper, written solo; or pair-work to create a public-facing blog with accompanying explanatory notes. Both options include a component of a narrative self-evaluation examining your progress over the semester, and a self-assigned grade. Our final “exam” will consist of the project, the self-assessment, a pair assessment if working in pairs, and a video or in-person meeting with me to discuss your assessments and coursework. All materials will be due by 12/15/2020 at 2pm.

Policies + Accommodations

General

- You must have access to reading materials and your notes on them for each class.
- All students must uphold the Academic Honor Code. Please make sure you understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. All cases of plagiarism and cheating will be reported to the College and will result in an F on the assignment, possibly the course.
- ***I respond to student emails within 48 hours of receiving them, between the hours of 9 am and 5 pm on weekdays. I do not respond to emails between 5 pm on Friday and 9 am on Monday.***

Accommodations

- If you believe that you need accommodations, please schedule an appointment with Disability Services (<https://smcaccess.acuityscheduling.com/schedule.php>) or email Toni at amessuri@smcvt.edu for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

Due Dates

- Exams: no makeup exams will be given except in documented cases of illness. **The final exam schedule is not flexible.** If you cannot turn in the final exam on time, you may either change your schedule or drop the course.
- Papers: If you have a conflict with a deadline, let me know with **7-10 days’** notice and I will work with you to give you a fair accommodation. I am happy to talk through, or look at drafts if you meet with me with at five days’ notice. I will not

answer questions about a paper if you send a message within 24 hours of a deadline. I will automatically deduct half a letter grade for late submissions. I will consider any time after a deadline the next day.

Submitting Writing

- All written work should be word-processed, double-spaced, have 1” margins, be written in 12-point font
- Please upload digital copies of your papers to Canvas on or before the deadline [please see course schedule for specifics]. There are a lot of you. Let’s save paper.
- You are responsible for following the rules of grammar, spelling and punctuation in all written work.

Privacy

Note that most writing produced for this course may be shared with and read by other members of the class.

I may be posting class recordings to Canvas (for asynchronous viewing by any students who need that option based on their time zone). Your privacy extends to how you interact in online classes. When a Zoom video is recorded, all text-based chat sessions, even private ones, are also recorded.

You may choose to edit your name and gender pronouns in the Zoom name feature such that the name we use to refer to you does not match the name on your legal transcript. I request that if you do this, you clarify with me prior to the first class that you will be doing so, in order for me to be able to accurately match you with your student records and use the correct name when speaking with you.

Please also note that the “host” of Zoom sessions—in this case, the course professor—has the option to remove individuals from the class session. I do not anticipate the need to do this, but should the need arise, a removal would count as an absence from class, and would require a follow-up office hours conversation to debrief.

Other University Policies

I adhere to and respect St. Michael’s College policies and regulations pertaining to the observance of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired student; sexual or gender-based harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination.

I encourage students to bring any questions or concerns regarding these policies to my attention.

Unit 1: Foundations

Weds 9/2

Introductions. Community Agreements. Anthropology in the context of coronavirus, global uprisings, and climate change.

Fri 9/4 Introductions

- *Investigating Culture* Chapter 1: Disorientation and Orientation
- Laura Bohannan, "Shakespeare in the Bush," p27
- Horace Miner, "Body Ritual among the Nacirema" p230

Weds 9/9

- *Investigating Culture*, Chapter 2: Spatial Locations

Fri 9/11

- Ruth Behar, *Women Writing Culture*, "Introduction: Out of Exile" (PDF on Canvas)
- Sue Bridwell Beckham, "The American Front Porch: Women's Liminal Space" p67

Weds 9/16

- *Investigating Culture*, Chapter 3: All We Have is Time

Fri 9/18

- Charis Boke, "Plant Time"
- All weekly reflections to date due
- Self-assessment practice in class

Unit 2: Communication and Connection

Weds 9/23

- *Investigating Culture*, Chapter 4: We Are What We Speak
- Ursula LeGuin, "She Unnames Them," p148

Fri 9/25

- Bring to class: Independent search for media on: code switching, gendered/racialized communication forms, other relevant audio/visual material
- Paper assignment handed out

****Tuesday 9/29 Paper Proposal Due by 5 pm****

Weds 9/30 BREAK DAY

Fri 10/2

- *Investigating Culture* Chapter 5, Relatives and Relations

- *They Say, I Say* on writing essays TBA
- Donna Haraway, “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin” *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 6, 2015, pp. 159-165

Weds 10/7

- Zoe Todd “Fish, Kin and Hope: Tending to Water Violations in *amiskwaciwâskahikan* and Treaty Six Territory” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*: Vol 43. 2017.
- *On Being* podcast interview with Robin Wall Kimmerer. “The Intelligence in All Kinds of Life.” (approx. 1 hour) Clickable audio link:



- url: <https://onbeing.org/programs/robin-wall-kimmerer-the-intelligence-of-plants/>

Fri 10/9

- Paper due
- Self-assessment due
- In-class review

Unit 3: Bodies and Borders I

Weds 10/14

- *Investigating Culture* Chapter 6: Our Bodies, Our Selves
- Heather Swanson, “Introduction: Bodies Tumbled into Bodies.”, in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*. (pp M51-M67) Ed. Tsing, Anna, et. Al.
- Margaret Mcfall-Ngai, “Noticing Microbial Worlds,” in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*. (pp M51-M67) Ed. Tsing, Anna, et. Al.

Fri 10/16

- Warwick Anderson and Ian R. Mackay, *Intolerant Bodies: A Short History of Autoimmunity*. Chapter 1, “Physiology with Obstacles.”
- Paul Farmer, “Who Lives and Who Dies?”

Weds 10/21

- *Investigating Culture*, Chapter 7: Food For Thought
- Choose:
 - Tatiana Chudakova, “Plant Matters: Buddhist medicine and economies of attention in postsocialist Siberia.”
 - Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* selections TBA

Fri 10/23

- Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* Preface, Introduction and Conclusion.

Weds 10/28

- Review and continued discussion

Unit 4: Bodies and Borders II

Fri 10/30

- Teresa Mares, *Life on the Other Border: Farmworkers and Food Justice in Vermont* (section 1)
- Essay assignment handed out

Weds 11/4

- *Life on the Other Border* (section 2)
- *They Say, I Say* readings
- in-class essay draft brainstorming and writing

Fri 11/6

- Essay 1st draft due
- In-class review and Self-assessment

Weds 11/11

- *Life on the Other Border* (section 3)

Fri 11/13

- Essay final draft due
- Self-assessment die
- Guest TBA

Weds 11/18

- *Investigating Culture*, Chapter 9:

Fri 11/20

- Hi'ilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Tamara Kneese. 2020 "Radical Care: Survival Strategies for Uncertain Times." *Social Text*. Vol. 38, No. 1.
- Reading on Days of Mourning, ancestor activity
- final exam assignment handed out

Days of Mourning (Nov 25-29)

Unit 5: So What? Anthropology and Envisioning Possibilities

Weds 12/2

- Read ALL of Ursula K. LeGuin's *The Dispossessed* for today
- In-class Self-assessment draft

Fri 12/4

- Julio Ramón Ribeyro, "Alienation (An Instructive Story with a Footnote)" p333
- Dana-Ain Davis, "What Did You Do Today?: Notes From A Politically Engaged Anthropologist"

- Jennifer L. Ayres (2017). “The work of shopping: Resellers and the informal economy at the goodwill bins,” *Business History*.

Weds 12/9

- Student-led discussion on *The Dispossessed*
- In-class work on finals: 1-1 meetings

Thurs 12/10

- 1-1 meetings, 11am-3pm

Fri 12/11

- Wrap-up
- In-class work on Self-assessment drafting: 1-1 meetings

Exam Period

- Final essay or project due 12/15, 2pm