

Introduction to Anthropology

AN 109 Fall 2020

W/F 1:30-3pm

Dr. Charis Boke

charis.boke@gmail.com

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:30pm-4:30pm; Fridays 12:30-1:30pm 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.

Attendance and Participation (30 points): 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 (40 points) and Discussion Leading (20 points): 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 Paper (30 points) and Proposal (10 points): There will be a paper due on October 9th. There are two key dimensions of an anthropological perspective you will work on in this assignments: the ability to reflect critically on personal experience and to explain how the most “common-sensical” ideas or practices are culturally shaped. The paper should be a balance of thick description and insightful analysis.

Précis (15 points each): You will write two short (300-700 word) pieces called précis in response to *Life on the Other Border*. These pieces will include *very brief* summaries of the sections of text you will have read; they will also include your response and any connections you can make to our course's core concepts. See the University of Wisconsin's Writing Guide for Précis for more on this form (<https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/assignments/nonfictionanalysis/>).

Final Project Proposal (10 points): You will write a proposal for your final project, due November 11th.

Final Project (30 points): You have two choices for the format of the final project: a formal term paper (2,500-3,500 words) 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. Our final "exam" will consist of the project, a self-assessment, and a video meeting with me to discuss your assessments and coursework. All materials will be due by 12/15/2020 at 2pm.

Semester total points: 200

Further Guidelines for Letter Grades

A: For any work to receive an A, it must clearly be exceptional or outstanding work, demonstrating keen insight and original thinking. It must not only demonstrate full and thoughtful understanding of the topic or issues addressed, but it must also provide a critical analysis of these. An A grade reflects a student's ability to clearly and thoughtfully articulate her engagement with the subject.

B: For any work to receive a B, the student's work must range consistently from good to excellent. That means her work must demonstrate strong originality, comprehension, critical thinking, and attention to detail. In addition, a B grade reflects a student's ability to clearly articulate her engagement with the subject.

C: For any work to receive a C, it must meet the expectations of the assignment. It must demonstrate solid comprehension, critical thinking, and attention to detail. In addition, a C grade reflects a student's ability to adequately articulate her engagement with the subject.

D: For any work to receive a D, it must marginally meet the expectations of the assignment. It demonstrates minimal comprehension, critical thinking, and attention to detail. In addition, a D grade may reflect a student's difficulty in articulating her engagement with the subject.

F: Work that receives an F grade does not meet the expectations or objectives of the assignment. It demonstrates consistent problems with comprehension, organization, critical thinking, and supporting details. In addition, an F grade

reflects a student's inability to articulate her engagement with the subject. Students are strongly urged to discuss this grade with their instructor and advisor.

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 Bohannon, “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
- Weekly reflections due (via discussion board)

Weds 9/16

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

Fri 9/18

- Charis Boke, “Plant Time”
- Weekly reflections due (via discussion board)
- 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)
- url: <https://onbeing.org/programs/robin-wall-kimmerer-the-intelligence-of-plants/>

Fri 10/9

- Paper due (in class)
- In-class review
- Weekly reflections due (11pm)

Unit 3: Bodies and Borders I

Weds 10/14

- *Investigating Culture* Chapter 6: Our Bodies, Our Selves
- Optional: 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

- Paul Farmer, “Who Lives and Who Dies?”
- Deborah Kaspin, “Women Who Breed Like Rabbits” in *Investigating Culture*
- Optional: Warwick Anderson and Ian R. Mackay, *Intolerant Bodies: A Short History of Autoimmunity*. Chapter 1, “Physiology with Obstacles.”

Weds 10/21

- *Investigating Culture*, Chapter 7: Food For Thought

Fri 10/23

- Dubisch, Jill. “You are what you eat” in *Investigating Culture*
- Optional:
 - Alondra Nelson, *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight Against Medical Discrimination* Preface, Introduction and Conclusion.
 - Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* Introduction

Weds 10/28

- Review and continued discussion
- Unit 2-3 Reflections due by 5pm under Discussion Board on Canvas

Unit 4: Bodies and Borders II

Fri 10/30

- Teresa Mares, *Life on the Other Border: Farmworkers and Food Justice in Vermont* (Introduction, Chapter 1+2)
- Précis assignment due next week: 300-700 word critical reflection connecting this ethnographic monograph with some key concepts we have covered in class

Weds 11/4

- *Life on the Other Border* (Chapter 3+4)

Fri 11/6

- Précis assignment (300-700 words) due on Canvas Discussion Board by 1pm
- Prepare to write another précis for Friday, 11/13

Weds 11/11

- *Life on the Other Border* (Chapter 5 + Conclusion)

Fri 11/13

- Second précis assignment (300-700 words) due on Canvas Discussion Board by 1pm
- Dr. Teresa Mares guest lecture

- Final Project Proposal Assignment: *You have two choices for the format of the exam: a formal term paper (2,500-3,500 words), 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. Our final “exam” will consist of the project, the self-assessment, and a video meeting with me to discuss your coursework. All materials will be due by 12/15/2020 at 2pm. A working proposal for this project will be due Wednesday 11/18 by 1 pm.*

Weds 11/18

- *Investigating Culture*, Chapter 9
- Final Exam informal proposal due on Discussion Board by 1 pm

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

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
- Student-led discussion

Fri 12/4

- Julio Ramón Ribeyro, “Alienation (An Instructive Story with a Footnote)” p333
- Jennifer L. Ayres (2017). “The work of shopping: Resellers and the informal economy at the goodwill bins,” *Business History*.
- Student-led discussion

Weds 12/9

- Dana-Ain Davis, “What Did You Do Today?: Notes From A Politically Engaged Anthropologist”
- Danya Glabau, “Natural’s Not in It: Countering biological essentialism with a biological futurism”
- Dr. Danya Glabau, guest lecture

Fri 12/11

- Wrap-up: Bring a celebratory food to class if you’d like
- In-class work on final project

Exam Period

- Final essay or project due 12/15, 2pm, under “Assignments” on Canvas