

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology: Notes 1

Introduction to the course

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- Anthropology 203: Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
 - I'm Bruce Owen
 - My own research is in Peruvian archaeology
 - but like most archaeologists in the US, I studied in an anthropology department, and work as an anthropologist
 - I work mostly in Peru
 - I've spent over 5 years there since 1983
 - Working with Peruvian colleagues, from university professors and students through farmers in remote rural areas
 - so I will use examples from Peru frequently
- This class is an introduction to cultural anthropology
 - You will learn what cultural anthropology is all about
 - the study of people in terms of their culture
 - Culture structures
 - how people understand themselves and the world,
 - and from there, how they behave, relate to each other, and organize themselves in groups.
 - Anthropology is based on learning what people do and think by first-hand experience with them.
 - the classic image of the anthropologist in a pith helmet, living with natives in a jungle somewhere
 - but we will see that anthropologists have also studied Shi'ites in Iraq, Mexican farmworkers in San Diego, crack dealers in New York, American high school and college students, and many others
 - Over a century of anthropologists' first-hand experience has shown that very little about culture is universal.
 - A lot of what we grow up thinking is just "the way it is", isn't.
 - The range of ways that people live, think, and act is vast.
 - Our way is just one of many.
 - Yet we are increasingly tied together by a global web of interactions, for better and for worse.
 - To understand the world and work successfully in it, as individuals, groups, businesses, and nations,
 - we have to set aside the preconceptions of our own native culture
 - and open our eyes to understanding other ways of thinking.
 - Opening our minds to other cultures also gives us insights into our own culture and society.
 - Anthropology helps us recognize some of our preconceptions
- In this course, you will get a taste of
 - some of the wide range of issues that anthropologists study,

- the concepts that anthropologists have developed to help to comprehend those issues,
- and many examples of different cultures, viewpoints, stories, and studies that illustrate them.
- Some of these issues are controversial, irritating or depressing
- some may seem “PC”, but I hope you will see how the issues are actually real, not frivolous
- and many have to do with how we as individuals, a society, and a nation view and respond to real, current problems.
- That is an incredibly broad field, and anthropologists study a wide variety of different things within it
 - culture, and ways of thinking about and explaining cultures
 - race and ethnicity
 - ways that different people make a living: foraging, farming, herding, working for wages...
 - ideas about truth and justice
 - economics and exchange in ways you won't get in an economics class
 - social inequality and hierarchies
 - how people establish their own identities, including gender roles
 - the wide variety of ways families and marriage can work
 - language, and how it relates to thought and belief
 - religion, ritual, witchcraft, and magic
 - this is more applicable to our own society than you might think!
 - globalization
 - immigration
 - and much more...
- By the time you finish this course, you will have learned
 - That much of what you "know" about people and life is actually specific to your culture, and not necessarily true of all people
 - “common sense” is actually not common, but specific to every culture
 - Concepts and approaches that can help you to understand other cultures and your own
 - Examples of different ways that people live and comprehend the world
 - How to have more respect and tolerance for people of other cultures
 - Information and intellectual skills that will help you deal with people of other cultures in social settings, school, job interviews, business, politics, and elsewhere
 - New ways to think about what is, and what should be, going on in the modern world, from commentary on CNN to your next opportunity to vote
- Before we get to the mechanics of the course...
 - Has anyone spent any time outside the US?
 - Has anyone spent much time in a culturally different place or community inside the US?
 - Does anyone have a friend, relative, roommate, co-worker, or other acquaintance who is from a different culture?
 - You might keep those experiences in mind throughout this course
 - I hope you will have comments, critiques, additions to make to class discussions

- I don't want to put anyone on the spot, but a lot of anthropology involves personal experiences and what we learn from them
- Now, on to the mechanics of the course.
 - This is also covered in the syllabus, which you should review.
- Format of the course
 - Mostly lectures
 - usually with some Powerpoint slides
 - occasionally with a bit of video or other media
 - I hope you will ask questions and make comments
 - Enrollment
 - The class is currently full
 - I am not allowed to make a waiting list, give special permissions, etc.
 - If you want to get in, just keep checking PeopleSoft and grab a seat if someone drops
 - This course satisfies the lower division Individual and Society (D1) General Education requirement.
- Readings
 - Three books, plus online readings
 - A textbook:
 - Robbins, Richard H. (2009) *Cultural Anthropology: A Problem-based Approach*, Fifth Edition. Cengage Advantage Books, Wadsworth Cengage Learning. ISBN 978-0-495-50928-8
 - We will use most, but not all, of this book
 - Well-written, interesting, not as cut-and-dried as many textbooks
 - You may note a fairly liberal, even radical, bias in some places
 - feel free to bring it up in class
 - You will need Robbins in time to read the first 15 pages by Tuesday, February 16
- Two ethnographies
 - An ethnography is an anthropological study of a particular group or culture
 - Lee, Richard B. (2003) *The Dobe Ju'hoansi*, Third Edition. Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology, Wadsworth Thomson Learning. ISBN 0-15-506333-2
 - This is a classic ethnography of a foraging (hunting and gathering) people in Africa
 - with updates on how they are integrating into the modern world
 - we will read it in parts that parallel the subjects we discuss in class
 - You will need Lee before the next class, Thursday, February 18
 - Chavez, Leo R. (2009) *Shadowed Lives: Undocumented Immigrants in American Society*. Second Edition. Case Studies in Cultural Anthropology, Wadsworth Thomson Learning. ISBN 978-0-1550-8089-8
 - This ethnography is closer to home: it deals with undocumented immigrants, mostly Mexican, working in the US
 - it is probably the easiest read of all our material
 - We will read it in a few big chunks (although you are free to spread it out further on your own)

- and spend one class session discussing it
- it does not particularly parallel the rest of the course
 - but you will see many of the ideas that we cover reflected in it
- and it makes the relevance of cultural anthropology to our own lives and political issues very obvious
- You will need Chavez later than the other two, by Thursday, April 15
 - but you might as well get it along with the other two
- All three books are available
 - online (Amazon.com, Half.com, textbook rental sites, etc.)
 - from the campus bookstore
 - from North Light Books & Cafe, 550 East Cotati Ave., next to Oliver's Market in the shopping complex on East Cotati Ave. (707 792-4300)
 - North Light is a locally-owned small business with lower prices on new and used books and better service than the campus bookstore.
 - It is also a good place to eat, drink, and hang out in the real (ish) world off campus.
- Be sure to get the current editions.
 - They all have new material and changed pagination
 - using earlier editions would put you at a disadvantage
- Online readings
 - Throughout the course, we will also use readings posted on the class website (which I will discuss later)
 - These online readings total to a bit more than the skinny ethnographies, but a bit less than the textbook
 - they add a bunch of other cases, opinions, and voices to the class
 - All the readings for the first few classes are online, so you have about two weeks to get the paper books
 - There is an online reading for the next class, so get on it!
- Key to the course: the class web page
 - note that this is NOT a WebCT (Blackboard) page
 - You can get to it from the SSU “Class web pages” list
 - From the SSU web page (sonoma.edu)
 - click on "Information for...students",
 - then "Class web pages",
 - then "Anthropology203.2: Introduction to Cultural Anthropology (Owen)"
 - You are responsible for checking it regularly
 - The web page takes precedence over the paper syllabus
 - It *will* change over the semester, so check it!
 - I will post new announcements, assignment information, deadlines, study guides, etc.
 - I may adjust the reading schedule if we fall behind or get ahead
 - I may add or subtract readings
 - but don't worry, it won't be too much
 - I may change deadlines, exam dates, etc.
 - The web page features:

- Class news, reminders, changes to assignments deadlines, readings, test dates, etc.
 - These can be important!
 - These announcements are generally in the red “Announcements” box that is always at the top right of the web page
- The schedule of readings
 - Each day shows what you should read from the books and online
 - the online items are links directly to the assigned material
 - Please do the readings *before* the class session
- The readings are a significant but not excessive amount, averaging about 35 pages per class, or 70 pages per week
 - but notice that the assignments are a bit shorter in the first half of the class
 - and a bit longer in the second half
- The schedule also has links to
 - lecture notes
 - Usually will be posted before the class session
 - These notes can be useful for studying
 - PowerPoint slides used in class
 - usually posted after the class session
 - also good for assignments and preparing for tests
 - Optional online sources of additional information and images related to some class sessions
- The schedule also shows
 - dates when the assignment or an optional draft is due
 - dates of the tests
- Virtual handouts
 - the syllabus
 - detailed information about the assignment
 - study guides, etc.
- Links to other websites with useful and interesting information and images
- To access some items, you will need a class user ID and password
 - because some of the reading is copyrighted, and because some of the images in the PowerPoint slides are copyrighted
 - in order to use these materials legally for "educational purposes", I have to restrict them to just you lucky students
 - Class user ID:
 - Class password:
- Furloughs
 - Because of the severe state budget cuts to the California State University system, most staff other than Police Services must take 2 unpaid furlough days a month, and faculty must to take 9 unpaid furlough days each semester.
 - We have to sign a statement that we will not work on furlough days.
 - President Armiñana has set six Fridays as campus-wide furloughs.

- The rest are to be divided, no more than one per week, between class days and days for preparation and grading.
- For this course, the result is two class sessions cancelled, or about 7% less school for your increased fees.
- The furlough days are indicated in the class schedule.
- Other furlough days may delay my returning some assignments or tests.
- Should you wish to contact your Governor or legislators about funding for the CSU, contact information is posted at
 - <http://www.sonoma.edu/uaffairs/legislators.shtml>
- Grading
 - 25%: Reading quizzes (around 1% per quiz).
 - Three multiple-choices questions about the readings at most class sessions.
 - 25%: Interview with an immigrant
 - You interview someone who immigrated to the US from another country after the age of 16.
 - You write a 5 to 7 page paper that deals with your interviewee's culture and your own, using anthropological approaches you learn in this course.
 - The interviewee may be a friend, a relative, someone you met standing in line, or whatever - just not the same person as anyone else in this class is interviewing, and not someone who has been interviewed for this assignment in a previous semester.
 - Guidelines about themes to cover, format, and so on will be posted on the class website.
 - 25%: In-class midterm
 - Short-answer and essay questions
 - maps on which you mark countries and other geographic landmarks covered in class.
 - a study guide will be posted on the web page
 - 25%: Final exam during exam week
 - similar to the midterm
 - emphasizes material from the second half of the course, but uses concepts from the first half
 - a study guide will be posted on the web page
- Grading scheme: This course is graded on a curve, with the minimum score for a B- initially set near the median
 - that is, about half the class gets a B- or better
 - I may then shift the grade ranges up or down somewhat to better reflect the performance of the class.
- Attendance
 - I do not take attendance or formally count it in grading. But...
 - I cover things in class that are not in the readings
 - You and your colleagues can ask questions
 - Sometimes I announce changes to assignments, deadlines, readings, etc. in class
 - Students who come to class tend to do better on the assignments and tests.
 - Attending class is the only way to take the daily quiz

- since most of the quizzes will come at the beginning of class, arriving on time is also important.
- I may consider your record of taking or missing quizzes if your course grade is a borderline case.
- Extra credit:
 - There are no provisions for extra credit in this class
- Submitting the assignment:
 - The written assignment must be submitted as a file attached to an email message to me.
 - No paper copy is needed.
 - I will comment and grade the paper on an evaluation form
 - This form will be included in the assignment information, to help you understand what I am looking for.
 - I will email your assignment back to you, with the completed form added to the end of the file.
 - The computer file is due by midnight of the due date.
 - The due date is on a day when the class does not meet, so that coming to class will not conflict with last-minute work on your assignment.
 - Due dates are indicated on the class web page.
 - Details on submitting the assignment and/or a draft will be included in the assignment information.
- Late assignment policy:
 - I will accept the interview assignment up to one week late with a 10% grading penalty.
- Drafts:
 - I encourage you to submit a draft of your assignment by the draft due date by email, just as with the final assignment.
 - I will return the draft with comments which can often help you to improve the final draft and get a better grade. There is no credit for submitting the draft in itself
- Email:
 - I usually reply to emails within 24 hours.
 - If you do not hear from me within 48 hours, assume that I did not get your message and try again.
- Plagiarism
 - Don't do it!
 - Plagiarism is using someone else's words, information, or ideas without giving that person credit.
 - This includes copying from your peers, websites, or other public sources, even brief phrases, on papers, tests, or any other work.
 - Simply editing or changing parts of copied text does not make it your original work; the result is still plagiarized.
 - Plagiarism is immoral and dishonest.
 - It is easy to avoid: just use your own words and indicate the sources of all your information.

- I have failed numerous students for plagiarism.
- University policy requires me to report plagiarism, and the University may impose sanctions up to expulsion.
- A more complete explanation, including advice on how to use material without plagiarizing, is posted on the class website.
- Please see me if you have any doubts or questions about this
- Students with Special Needs:
 - If you are a student with special learning needs and you think you may require accommodations, your first step is to register with the campus office of Disabled Student Services, Salazar 1049, phone 664-2677.
 - DSS will provide you with written confirmation of your verified disability and authorize recommended accommodations.
 - You then bring this recommendation to me, and we work out how to handle the accommodations.
 - If you think you may require assistance evacuating a building in the event of a disaster, please let me know what type of assistance you think you may need.
- University policies
 - the syllabus includes a link to University policies on adding and dropping, appealing grades, cheating, and other things you might want to know about
- Contacting me:
 - My office hours:
 - Tu-Th 4:00-5:00
 - in Stevenson 3007
 - or see me after class
 - I can also arrange to see you earlier on a Tuesday or Thursday
 - please contact me to set up a time
 - email me at: bruce.owen@sonoma.edu , which I usually check at least once every day
 - or click on the email link near the top of the course web page
 - You can try to catch me by phone on Tuesday or Thursday afternoons
 - but if I don't answer, don't bother leaving a message; I don't check the voice mail.
 - for the record, the number is 664-2875
 - I have a box in the Anthro department office, Stevenson 2054, where you can leave messages or papers for me
 - If the door to Stevenson 2054 is locked, go in through Stevenson 2070
 - please don't slide things under my office door, stick them to a nearby bulletin board, etc., because I share that office with several other people who may not correctly figure out what to do with your paper.
- Photos