Introduction to the course

Anthropology 203.2: 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 I work as an anthropologist
I teach not only archaeology, but also cultural anthropology and biological anthropology
that is one of the great things about anthropology: it is an exceptionally diverse field
a license to follow interests in a wide range of areas
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 is the framework that sets up…
how people understand themselves and the world,
and from there, what they do, how they relate to each other, and how they 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 anthropologists have studied all kinds of people, in all sorts of settings
– Shi’ites in Iraq
– Mexican farmworkers in San Diego
– crack dealers in New York
– nuclear weapons designers at Los Alamos National Laboratory
– 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 own assumptions

In this course, you will get a taste of some of the wide range of findings and issues anthropologists work on

- 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…
- economics and exchange, in ways you won’t get in an economics class
- ideas about truth and justice
- social inequality and hierarchies
- how people come to have 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 the news
  - 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
  - some of you may have direct, personal knowledge that contradicts or adds to the course material
– please bring it up!
– 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
  – Two books, plus online readings
      – An ethnography that reads like a novel
      – Gives a personal taste of what fieldwork is like
      – Describes experiences from the 1950s, but very relevant to Iraq and the world today
      – 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
      – be sure to get the Third edition; it has corrections and new material not in the previous editions.
    – Both books are available
      – online (Amazon.com, Half.com, textbook rental sites, etc.)
      – from the campus bookstore
      – but cheaper 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.
  – Online readings
    – Throughout the course, we will also use readings posted on the class website (which I will discuss later)
    – The reading for the next class session is online
      – but you will need Fernea for next week, and Lee a week or two later
  – 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 the website 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:
  – Announcements: 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
      – 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 assignments or an optional draft is due
    – dates of the tests
  – Virtual handouts
    – the syllabus
    – detailed instructions for the assignments
− study guides for the tests, 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:

− Grading
  − 5%: Recognizable digital photo of yourself
    − so I have some chance of linking your name to your face
    − two ways to get it to me
      − send it to me attached to an email message
        − name the file like a203-2-11s-SmithJane.jpg
      − or have your photo taken here at the end of this or a future class
  − 10%: Short “concept” paper
    − I assign you a concept or term discussed in the first few weeks of class
    − you find an example of it in *Guests of the Sheik*, by Fernea
    − you write a one-page essay
      − briefly explaining the concept
      − identifying and explaining the example in Fernea
      − and discussing how or why the example illustrates the concept, or how the concept
        applies to the example
  − 20%: Reading quizzes (around 1% per quiz).
    − Three multiple-choices questions about the readings at most class sessions.
  − 20%: 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.
  − 20%: 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 assignments:
  – The concept paper and the interview with an immigrant paper are submitted by attaching them to an email to me
  – detailed instructions will be posted on the class website
  – they are due at 11:59 PM on days when the class does not meet, so that last-minute work on the assignment does not cause you to miss class
  – you can also turn in a paper copy of the assignment at the next class as a backup
  – if I didn’t get the emailed file for some reason, the paper copy will show that you had the assignment done by shortly after the deadline
  – I will accept such slightly-late papers with a 5% grading penalty
  – but I only grade the computer file, so you still have to get a matching file to me in order to get credit
  – this allows me to keep and search old papers, so no one should be tempted to recycle old assignments or to share work with classmates
  – it also allows me to return the assignment to you by email, with comments and grading notes added

– Late assignment policy:
  – in addition to the 5% “slightly late” penalty for paper copies, I will accept assignments up to one week late with a 10% grading penalty.

– Drafts:
  – I encourage you to submit a draft of your interview with an immigrant 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
  – 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.
  – Don’t do it!
  – 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:
    – Tuesday 1:30-3:30, Thursday 2:30-3:30
    – Stevenson 2054H
  – I can also arrange other times on afternoons on Monday, Wednesday, or Thursday
    – please contact me to set up a time
  – or see me after class
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 Mon, Tues, Wed, or Thurs. 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 664-2181.
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 and might not get your message.

Networking:
meet at least two people sitting near you.
exchange names and email addresses.
you might contact your new acquaintances if you miss a class, want to study together, etc.

What to do next:
check out the class website.
review the syllabus, plagiarism statement, etc.
find and read the online reading assignment for Wednesday.
Bonvillain 2006: Extracts from What is Anthropology?
get the two books.
first reading assignment in Fernea is next Monday.
first reading assignment in Lee is Monday, Feb. 21.
get a recognizable digital photo of yourself to me.
as “a203-2-11s-SimpsonHomer.jpg” attached to an email to me at
bruce.owen@sonoma.edu.
or have your photo taken here, after this or a future class.