

Introduction to Social Cultural Anthropology
The Politics of Culture Change

Class: 1:45 - 3:30 O'Conr 206, Tuesday, Thursday
 Instructor: Dr. M. E. Hegland, O'Conr 318, 554-4646
 Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 3:30 - 4:00 Or by appointment

Course Description:

This course is designed to provide an introduction to the field of social/cultural anthropology, the subject areas studied by social/cultural anthropologists, and the methodologies with which social/cultural anthropologists collect and analyze data. We will practice the skills necessary to conduct anthropological investigation--in-depth reading and study of other cultures, organizing data to support arguments, discussing, speaking, analyzing, and writing. As anthropologists generally study a culture other than their own, we will investigate several other cultures. We will also use our knowledge about other cultures to look back at our own culture to more critically think about and better understand our own culture and society.

As an example of a common anthropological focus, we will examine several political and power systems and how people try to manipulate them during the process of social and cultural change. In keeping with anthropological tradition, we will take a holistic approach to political systems; we will examine how political and power systems are interrelated with other aspects of societies. In discussing political and power systems, we will be interested in far more than formal political activities such as political parties and elections. Rather, "political" is taken to mean anything having to do with the organization and distribution of power. Systems under examination can thus include informal political organization in hunting and gathering, horticultural, agricultural, and industrial societies; political organization of religious groups; and even gender, family, and interpersonal politics. Politics is taken to mean all aspects of life having to do with how people get what they want.

What are the politics of culture change? Who wants change and how do they try to bring change about? Who doesn't want change and how do they attempt to prevent it? What are the effects of social and cultural change for individuals and how do people attempt to deal with these effects? Are these changes helpful or harmful for individuals? Can aspects of their culture be helpful or harmful in dealing with social change? What are the forces and groups resisting change? How are aspects of culture maintained?

The spirit of the class will be one of active learning and cooperative inquiry, examination, and analysis. We will study about anthropology using a hands-on approach: we will deal with both of the two main steps in anthropological inquiry: 1. description or the gathering and organizing of information, mainly through *participant observation* and in-depth, open-ended interviewing over long term contact, and 2. analysis or the interpreting and explaining of data to shed light on how and why things happen the way they do. The class will emphasize discussion and writing with the aim of exploring ideas and interconnections. Everyone is required to read, study, and think about the readings and to discuss the readings. It is expected that students will work in an active way inside the classroom as well as outside.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

Attendance is required. The class is a discussion/seminar/active learning class, and you certainly can not discuss or be active in the learning process if you aren't present. Students who have no absences will have better opportunity to earn a good class participation grade. Students are allowed two unexcused absences only. With each additional unexcused absence after two, your grade will be lowered by **a third of a grade**. If you are more than five minutes late or leave class early, it is counted as an absence. An absence can be excused only for serious and documented reason and only if (1) I am notified before hand and (2) given printed documentation on the day you return to class (such as note from health center, hospital bill, court order, funeral program, coach, etc.). Each student is responsible for signing the attendance sheet.

Participation is required. Students should actively engage in gathering material and thinking about the politics of culture change in American society and elsewhere. I will call on students if necessary. Contribution to class

discussion is an important part of the grade. Students are expected to discuss concepts and ideas and do more than just add information to the conversation. They are expected to probe the material and come to new insights. **Students are to share responsibility for the learning process and will be evaluated accordingly.** Just start talking!!! (See me if you have problems.)

Preparation is required. You cannot discuss or be active in the learning process without preparation. Students are expected to study assignments carefully, take notes, and to review and think about notes from readings, class lectures, discussions and films. While you read the materials, list 1. main issues, 2. main points, and 3. your thoughts and questions. You must be prepared at all times to discuss class materials. You should be prepared every day to write an in-class essay on the reading assignment for the day or on any other class materials, such as lecture material or films. Your answer must demonstrate that you have read and thought about the materials. There will be about 10 in-class essays, which will be graded with a check, check plus, check minus, or a zero. Two check minuses equals a zero. You are allowed one zero without affecting your grade. After one zero, with each addition zero, your grade will be lowered by **a third of a grade**. Studying the reading assignment before each class session and being prepared to discuss and write about it is the minimum requirement of the course. In this course, it is of the greatest importance to be prepared for each class.

In order to pass the course, all requirements must be completed. Plagiarism or cheating brings an automatic F for the course and perhaps more. See student handbook and handout on writing essays for the definition of plagiarism.

Promptness in fulfilling assignments is required. Essays or assignments may be completed late only if (1) I am notified beforehand and (2) the reason is serious and documented. Paper grades will go down by a third for each day or fraction of a day handed in late. Your essays must be handed in at the beginning of class on the day due.

Aims of the Course:

It is expected that the course will assist you to attain:

1. Acquaintance with the types of topics which anthropologists look into and the kinds of questions which anthropologists ask when they study cultures and societies, and with some of the concepts and paradigms which anthropologists use to try to address their questions, through reading work by anthropologists and watching films that anthropologists have made.

2. In-depth knowledge about several cultures/societies through the perspective of anthropologists and indigenous people, and a better understanding of the insider point of view of people who live in those cultures and societies, as well as the pressures for and against culture change, the politics of cultural change. We will study about the kind of conditions and factors which influence people's behaviors and attitudes, the kind of pressures which influence them to follow cultural requirements, and the ways in which people try to manipulate or resist cultural pressures. What kinds of influences and conditions encourage and bring about change? Why and how do some people try to resist change or to use aspects of "traditional culture" to try to influence people, to resist change, or to bring about change?

2. Knowledge about and Practice with the Process of Anthropological Inquiry.

We will study a number of examples of how anthropologists have collected and organized data about certain cultures and about culture change and the politics of culture change. Using readings, films, class lectures, and your own observations as data, you will have a number of opportunities to collect, organize, analyze, and present anthropological findings in written and oral assignments, to develop an argument and support it with data, to do what anthropologists do.

To Gain Experience and Competence in the Process of Anthropological Inquiry Using a Hands-On Approach:

a. We will study a number of examples of how anthropologists have collected and organized data related to the different cultures and how they have analyzed this data and presented the data and their analysis.

b. Using readings, films, class lectures, and your own observations as data, you will have a number of opportunities to collect, organize, analyze and present anthropological findings in shorter written and oral work—in-class essays, out-of-class essays, discussion, and presenting discussion reports.

c. Finally, having studied how a number of others have done it and having conducted a number of your own mini-anthropological research projects largely using data collected by others and presented in written work and films, you will have the opportunity to conduct anthropological description and analysis using data you collect yourself and to

which you apply your own original analysis. The paper will be based on participant observation and/or interviewing on a topic related to the politics of culture change which you have observed or experienced in your own life. You will develop a research topic in cooperation with the professor and other students. We will prepare for it and work on it during the term, and you will briefly present your findings and conclusions to the class orally at the end of the term.

Your knowledge about the process of anthropological inquiry will thus be acquired in three steps of ascending difficulty, and will culminate in your carrying out of an anthropological research project similar to those conducted by professional anthropologists except that it will be much shorter.

If you are interested in looking into the possibility of an anthropology major or minor, please see Dr. George Westermark, Anthropology Section Head.

Required Readings: Available in the bookstore. Several articles will be available on e-res from the Library. (ISCA)

Shostak, Marjorie

1981 Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman, Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press.

Lame Deer, John (Fire) and Richard Erdoes

1972 Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions, New York: A Touchstone Book, Simon & Schuster.

Friedl, Erika

1997 Children of Deh Koh, Young Lives in an Iranian Village, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Belmonte, Thomas

1979 The Broken Fountain, New York: Columbia University Press.

Reading Schedule:

(Take careful and comprehensive notes and list main issues, important points, and your thoughts and questions on all readings, films, and speakers. Take notes on contributions and discussion of other students as well as of professor.)

Tues. Jan. 6 Introduction – The Anthropological Approach, Introduction to the Field of Social Cultural Anthropology

I. Hunters and Gatherers and Culture Change: The !Kung

Thurs. Jan. 8 *Nisa* 1-92

Tues. Jan. 13 *Nisa* 95-179

Thurs. Jan. 15 *Nisa* 181-270

Tues. Jan. 20 *Nisa* 273-332

Thurs. Jan. 22 “Eating Christmas in the Kalahari,” Richard Borshay Lee, in *Applying Cultural Anthropology*, eds. Aaron Podolefsky and Peter J. Brown, pp. 141-145, Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2002.

“Ancient Bodies, Modern Customs, and Our Health,” Elizabeth D. Whitaker, in *Applying Cultural Anthropology*, eds. Aaron Podolefsky and Peter J. Brown, pp. 67-76, Boston, MA: McGraw Hill, 2002.

Review and Prepare for Essays and Presentation/Student Participation Activity

Tues. Jan. 27 **Essays Due. PRESENTATION/STUDENT PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY**

II. (Herders) and Culture Change - Native Americans: South Dakota Lakota (Sioux)

Thurs. Jan. 29 *Lame Deer* 11-90

Tues. Feb. 3 *Lame Deer* 91-182, 198-235

Thurs. Feb. 5 *Lame Deer* 247-283

Review and Prepare for Essays and Presentation/Student Participation Activity

Tues. Feb. 10 **Essays Due. PRESENTATION/STUDENT PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY**

III. How Is Culture Maintained? Children Learning Culture in a Modernizing Agricultural Society and the Politics of Culture Change

Thurs. Feb. 12 *Children of Deh Koh* Intro, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 6, 9

Tues. Feb. 17 *Children of Deh Koh* Chapters 11, 12, 13, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25,

Thurs. Feb. 19 *Children of Deh Koh* Chapters 26, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33
Review and Prepare for Essays and Presentation/Student Participation Activity

Tues. Feb. 24 **Essays Due. PRESENTATION/STUDENT PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY**

**IV. Forces Resisting Change in an Industrialized, Urban Under-class:
Family, Community, Economy in Naples, Italy**

Thurs. Feb. 26 *The Broken Fountain* ix through 49
Work on preparing research data and writing paper.

Tues. Mar. 2 *The Broken Fountain* 51-121
Work on preparing research data and writing paper.

Thurs. Mar. 4 *The Broken Fountain* 123-144
Work on preparing research data and writing paper.
Review and Prepare for Essays and Presentation/Student Participation Activity

Tues. Mar. 9 **Essays Due. PRESENTATION/STUDENT PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY**

V. A Situation of Culture Change, the Politics of Culture Change Which YOU Have Observed Or Experienced.

Thurs. Mar. 11 Oral Presentation of Student Papers.
(Two copies of) **Research papers based on participation and interviewing about a situation of conflict over culture change due.**

Congratulations!

Grading Policy for Anthropology 172, The Anthropology of Aging

Grades will be determined by consolidating the numerical values given to various contributions according to the following scale:

93: A, 89-92: A-, 86-88: B+, 83-85: B, 80-82: B-, 77-79: C+, 74-76: C,
70-73: C-, 66-69: D+, 62-65: D, 58-61: D-, 57 and below....F

As noted in your syllabus, students are allowed only two unexcused absences. For an excused absence, you must inform me ahead of time and bring printed documentation the first day back at class. With each unexcused absence after two, your grade goes down by a third of a grade. If you are more than five minutes late or leave class early, it counts as an absence.

Grades will be computed numerically and will be derived from the following requirements:

1. Class preparation and participation.....15%

You should come to class with a thorough knowledge of the material in the day's assignment, careful notes on the main ideas and themes in the material, your ideas and analysis of the material, and two or three good discussion questions. In other words, you must come to class prepared for informed and thoughtful discussion and writing on the reading material. *For each reading, list: a. main issues, b. main points, c. your thoughts and questions.* As much as possible, try to engage with the materials and the issues, contributing to class discussion in a creative, insightful, and knowledgeable manner. Quality as well as quantity of oral contributions to discussion are significant for grading. Important sources of grading in this area will be: participation in small group discussions, reporting to the class from small group discussions, class discussions, class debates, and participation during presentation/student participation activity.

2. Three essays, each worth 15% for a total of.....45%

A thoughtful, analytical, well-structured essay with an original, central thesis or argument based on each book must be handed in at the beginning of class on the day of the student presentation. Students must hand in **two** typed copies of each paper, one for me to grade and return and the other for my files. Papers must be at least two pages long and should be no longer than three pages. Students on the Presentation/Student Participation Activity team do NOT have to hand in a paper. Paper grades will be lowered by a third of a grade for each day or fraction of a day handed in late. See sheets on essays.

3. Presentation and guiding the student participation activity.....20%

Class members will be divided into four groups and each group will be responsible for a creative, dynamic, and provocative presentation. Each group will also develop a creative way to engage other class members with the materials and issues, allowing them to apply and extend their knowledge and insights. Each group will be prepared to answer questions, and lead discussion of the text and the issues it introduces. Each group will have to meet outside of class in order to plan, organize, and research the presentation and discussion. Start early with your preparations. See sheet on presentations and student participation activity leadership.

4. Fieldwork Essay Based on Participant Observation and Interviewing about the Politics of Culture Change =.....20%

The last section of the course will be devoted to applying the knowledge, ideas, and perspectives gained through class materials to preparing for and conducting research about a situation of difference or conflict over culture change, which you have observed and/or experienced, and then developing a paper and oral presentation based on the description and analysis of this interviewing and/or participant observation. This assignment will provide practice in actually doing what anthropologists do, actually being involved in anthropological research. See sheets on interviewing paper.

Additional impact on grading: Periodically, announced and unannounced essays on the readings and other class materials will be given. Such essays will serve to give you (a) a reality check make sure you have understood the material, (b) opportunity to integrate course material in a thoughtful and insightful manner, (c) opportunity to think about and extend your insights about the material, (d) preparation for small group and class discussions, (e) practice in writing and analysis to help for the longer essays, and (f) opportunity to help develop ideas and arguments for the longer, out-of-class essays.

Please remember that attendance is required: with each unexcused absence after two, your grade goes down by 1/3. Perfect attendance and high scores on in-class essays will improve your final grade, especially if it is on the edge.