

ANTH 101:**Exploring Sociocultural Anthropology**

Spring 2007

Tues & Thurs 10:30am – 12:20pm

Smith 120

<http://courses.washington.edu/anth101/>**Professor:** Janelle Taylorjstaylor@u.washington.edu

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Hours: Tu 2:00-3:30 or by appt

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ccs2@u.washington.eduOffice: Denny 429 Hours: Tu 2-3:00
W 3-4:00, Th 2-3:00**About the Course:**

This course introduces you to some of the key ideas, concepts, and methods of sociocultural anthropology. Sociocultural anthropology is a fundamentally comparative social science that inquires into the most basic dynamics of human social life, as expressed amid the riotous diversity and complexity of today's world.

Sociocultural anthropologists ask how systems of thought (which may vary enormously) relate to systems of social action (the observable patterns of how people act and interact in society). Rather than a universal, one-size-fits-all answer, however, anthropologists seek comparative understanding of how ideas and actions actually do work together in very specific social settings, which they document and analyze through ethnographic research. In former times, anthropologists concentrated virtually all their efforts on far-off places, and on societies thought to be most "different" from those in which they themselves lived. Today, however, they consider everyone – from boys fighting guerilla wars in Africa, to women petitioning the courts in Iran, and even to scholars or students at the University of Washington – to be a legitimate focus for ethnographic investigations.

This introduction to sociocultural anthropology focuses on ethnographic research, as that which is most distinctive and interesting about it. Ethnography is a form of inquiry that seeks to understand how people interpret and act in the world by putting their words and deeds into context – situating them within local systems of meaning, and/or within relations of power. As people studying other people, ethnographers also reflect on their own contexts and how they are positioned relative to the people they write about.

When placed in context, practices that you might regard as irrational or even disgusting can be made intelligible. Much of what people take to be universal is in fact quite local and parochial, and anthropologists can help to combat racial and cultural intolerance by showing how very specific to a time and place most of what we regard as "common sense" really is.

In this course you will learn some of the concepts that anthropologists use to study social life, and you will learn something about life as it is lived in a wide variety of settings. Our purpose, however, is not simply to learn some "stuff" about particular groups of people, but rather to learn anthropological ways of asking questions about social life, and seeking answers through ethnographic research. Doing so can help build understanding, empathy, tolerance and a sense of mutual responsibility, all of which are much needed in today's world.

Texts: • Robert H. Lavenda and Emily A. Schultz, *Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology, Third Edition*, Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007. Available at the University Book Store.
• Reading packet, will be available at Ave Copy Center, 4141 University Way NE
• Course website: <http://courses.washington.edu/anth101/>

Requirements:

Web-quizzes:

Five times over the quarter, roughly once every other week, you will be e-mailed the URL for a web-quiz. NOTE: So that you can receive credit for these quizzes, you are responsible for ensuring you're your TA has your current UW e-mail address. The purpose of the web-quizzes is to assess your comprehension of course readings, lectures, guest-speaker presentations, and in-class films. To do well on web-quizzes you must be present and paying attention in class. Each web-quiz will contain multiple-choice questions that may address any aspect of the readings, lectures, guest-speaker presentations, and films. Each web-quiz will be available from Friday 2pm until 5pm the following Monday. During that window of time, you may spend as much or as little time as you wish taking the web-quiz, and may freely consult your books and class notes. For purposes of the final grade, your best four web-quiz scores out of five will count.

Three paper projects will each include both a "data-collection" component (observations or interviews and note-taking) and an "analysis" component (writing a short paper that draws on the data collected in your notes). We will discuss in class the necessary practicalities of "data-collection" (how to conduct an interview, observe, take notes, etc). Detailed guidelines and evaluation criteria for each paper will also be distributed in class.

Paper Project #1: Observation (1-2 pages plus notes) due in Week 3

For this project you will be asked to observe social interactions in a public place of your choosing (such as a Laundromat, a restaurant, a mall, a park etc.) for a period of at least one hour, and take careful note of what you observe using a double-entry note-taking format (which we shall discuss and practice in class). Drawing upon these notes, you will then write a 1-2 page description that identifies any observable patterns or implicit rules that people seem to be following. Your description should conclude with a question about social life that emerges from your observations. The purpose of this paper is to provide you an opportunity to 1) learn and practice skills of careful observation and note-taking, and 2) from your observations, develop anthropological questions. The broader purpose is to learn how, as an ethnographer, to notice and become curious about some aspect of social life that you might take for granted had you not taken the effort to observe and describe it carefully in this manner.

Paper Project #2: The Word (2-3 pages plus notes) due in Week 5

For this paper project you are asked to provide an "insider's explanation" of a word that either is only used, or is used in a special way, within some specific social group to which you belong (the people you work with at your job; an ethnic, religious, sexual or other subculture to which you belong; a sorority or fraternity; a sports team or club organized around a particular hobby, etc.) First you will take fieldnotes that record your observations of how the word you have chosen is used in social life. You will then write a 2-3 page paper explaining the meaning and social significance of the word. The purpose of this paper is provide you an opportunity to 1) learn and

practice skills of taking fieldnotes, 2) from your fieldnotes, develop a description and explanation of an insider term. The broader purpose is to learn how, as an ethnographer, to pay attention to and reflect on the role of language in social life.

Paper Project #3: Mutual Interview

Ethnography is fundamentally about taking people seriously: listening carefully, observing closely, reflecting thoughtfully, and striving to represent people, their words, views and lives in a manner that is careful, respectful, thoughtful and honest. The purpose of this paper project is to develop and practice the skills necessary to write ethnographically about other people, and – as a necessary component of those skills – to gain an appreciation of what it is like to be written about. For this paper project you will pair up with another student and interview each other, write about each other, read the account that your partner wrote about you, and write a reflection on this process. Please note that this is a collaborative exercise, some parts of which are conducted in class – absence from class on those days will present logistical headaches that you will be responsible for sorting out (in consultation with your section leader).

3a: Classmate Interviews (take notes) conducted in section, Week 7

Bring with you to section an object that is meaningful to you. You will pair up with a classmate, and each will interview the other about the object, asking open-ended questions and taking careful notes.

3b: Two copies of your description (2 pages plus notes) due in section, Week 8

Write a short (2 pages) description of your partner's chosen object, what it means and why it is important to him or her. Your account should include quotations from your notes that illustrate and support your interpretation. Bring to section two copies of your description, each one stapled together with photocopies of your notes: one copy is for your TA, and the other is for your interview partner.

3c: Two copies of your response and reflection (1 page) due in section, Week 9

Read your partner's description of your object and what it means to you. Write a short (1 page) response in which you reflect on the experience of reading someone else's description of you, and what lessons it may contain for people who aspire to conduct ethnographic research and write ethnographic accounts.

Percentage of Grade for Each Assignment:

Quizzes	40% (best 4 @ 10% each)
Paper 1	10%
Paper 2	15 %
Paper 3	20%
Final Exam	15 %

Expectations and Policies

Lecture and Section: This is a lecture-discussion course. Lectures take place twice per week on Tuesdays and Thursdays; discussion sections will meet once per week, on Wednesdays or Fridays. Students are expected to attend both lecture and section, as both are important for your learning in this course. While lectures will elaborate on readings, they will also offer new material which is not covered by the readings, including occasional film viewings, presentations

by guest speakers, and in-class exercises. Sections will be used to discuss and analyze readings and lectures, and to discuss and review writing assignments.

Guest speakers: A number of sociocultural anthropologists have graciously agreed to speak to this class about their own research, studying topics as diverse as tourism, prisons, video games, war, organic foods, health and illness, biodiversity science, women's rights, in settings that include Tahiti, Iran, Morocco, Indonesia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and the Marshall Islands, as well as the U.S. As you listen to each guest speaker, consider these questions: how did they become curious about this place and topic? How in their research do they work to put people's words and deeds into context? What did they observe, who did they talk to, what materials or texts did they collect? What did they learn through ethnographic research that they could not have known or understood without doing such research?

Honesty: Honesty in academic work requires that you give credit where credit is due, by indicating clearly when you are quoting other people's words and writings, and providing citations to your sources. Under no circumstances will plagiarism be permitted. If you are uncertain about how to cite sources or what constitutes plagiarism, please consult with your TA, the Writing Center staff, and/or library staff.

Laptops: You are welcome to use a laptop to take notes during lectures. Should you choose to do so, you should plan to sit in the front half of the classroom. Students using their laptops to play games, surf the web, watch movies etc. during lectures will be instructed to turn them off.

E-mail: I (Prof. Taylor) will respond to student e-mails related to the course as soon as possible, generally within one to two working days. I will however neither read nor respond to e-mails on evenings or weekends. I also will not answer e-mails asking questions that are answered in the syllabus (such as when a particular assignment is due, etc). Section leaders will each have their own e-mail policy, please familiarize yourself with it.

Disability Accommodations: Students with disabilities are invited to contact Disabled Student Services at (206) 543-8924/V, (206) 543-8925/TTY, (206) 616-8379/FAX or email uwdss@u.washington.edu. If you need academic accommodation for any reason, please discuss this with us early in the term.

Class Schedule

Week 1

Tu Mar 27 **Introduction to the Course**

Th Mar 29 **Ethnographic Research**

Before class today, read...

L&S Chapter 1, "Anthropology"

Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture"

Rosaldo, "Grief and a Headhunter's Rage"

Week 2

Tu Apr 3 **Creating a Context for Understanding, Take 1: "Culture"**

L&S Chapter 2, "Culture"

Pierpont, "The Measure of America: How a Rebel Anthropologist Waged War on Racism"

Th. Apr 5 **Creating a Context for Understanding, Take 2: “Structural Violence”**

Guest Speaker: Dr. Rachel Chapman: Inequality and Illness, in Mozambique & the Urban U.S

L&S Chapter 4, “Culture and the Individual”

Farmer, “On Suffering and Structural Violence”

Web-quiz #1

Available 2pm Fri 4/6 – 5pm Mon 4/9

Week 3

Tu Apr 10 **Language and Culture**

Guest Speaker: Dr. Celia Lowe: Cultures of Nature in Indonesian Biodiversity Conservation

L&S Chapter 3, “Language”

Agar, “Culture Blends” and “The Circle and the Field,” from *Language Shock*

Th Apr 12 **Language and Power**

Becker, “How I Learned What a Crock Was.”

Cohn, “Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals.”

Film: “American Tongues”

Paper Project #1: Double-Entry Observation

Due to section leader by 5pm Fri 4/13

Week 4

Tu Apr 17 **Food**

Guest Speaker: Dr. Michelle Barry: Meanings and Uses of Organic Foods

Dubisch, “You Are What You Eat”

Messer and Shipton, “Hunger in Africa: Untangling Its Human Roots”

Th Apr 19 **Death**

L&S Chapter 5, “Religion, Worldview and Art”

Sharp, “The Good Death: Managing and Memorializing the Dead.”

Film: “In Her Own Time”

Web-quiz #2

Available 2pm Fri 4/20 – 5pm Mon 4/23

Week 5

Tu Apr 24 **Gender and Sexuality**

Gottlieb, “Interpreting Gender and Sexuality: Approaches from Cultural Anthropology”

Seizer, “Paradoxes of Visibility in the Field: Queer Rites of Passage in Anthropology”

Th Apr 26 **Work**

L&S Chapter 6, “The Dimensions of Social Organization”

Colen, “Like a Mother To Them: Stratified Reproduction and West Indian Childcare Workers and Employers in New York”

Paper Project #2: The Word

Due to section leader by 5pm Fri 4/27

Week 6

Tu May 1 **War**

Guest Speaker: Dr. Daniel Hoffman: Youths at War in Sierra Leone

L&S Chapter 7, "Political Anthropology"

Gilsenan, "On Conflict and Violence"

Film: "Landmines: A Love Story"

Th May 3 **Tourism**

Guest Speaker: Dr. Miriam Kahn: Testing and Tourism in the French Pacific

MacClancy, "Paradise Postponed: The Predicaments of Tourism"

Film: "Cannibal Tours"

Web-quiz #3

Available 2pm Fri 5/4 – 5pm Mon 5/7

Week 7

Tu May 8 **Affluence and Poverty**

L&S Chapter 8, "Economic Anthropology"

Bourgois, "Understanding Inner-City Poverty: Resistance and Self-Destruction Under U.S. Apartheid"

Th May 10 **Imprisonment**

Guest Speaker: Dr. Lorna Rhodes: Washington State Prisons

Rhodes, "Psychopathy and the Face of Control in Supermax."

Paper Project #3, Step a:

Classmate interviews conducted in section - DON'T MISS SECTION THIS WEEK!

Week 8

Tu May 15 **Rights**

Guest Speaker: Dr. Arzoo Osanloo: Women Claiming Rights in Iran

L&S Chapter 10, "Marriage and Family"

Osanloo, "Doing the 'Rights' Thing: Methods and Challenges of Fieldwork in Iran."

Th May 17 **Kinship**

L&S Chapter 9, "Kinship and Descent"

Yan, "Practicing Kinship in Rural North China"

Paper Project #3, Step b:

Two copies of your description (1-2 pages plus notes) due in section

Web-quiz #4

Available 2pm Fri 5/18 – 5pm Mon 5/21

Week 9

Tu May 22 **"Race" and Racism**

Harrison, "Unraveling 'Race' for the Twenty-First Century"

Chin, "Ethnically Correct Dolls: Toying With the Race Industry"

Th May 24 **Politics and Policy**

Guest Speaker: Dr. Holly Barker: Marshall Islanders' Fight for Justice

L&S Chapter 11, "Globalization and the Culture of Capitalism"

Barker, "Fighting Back"

Film: "Half Life"

Paper Project #3, Step c:

Two copies of your response and reflection (1-2 pages plus notes) due in section

Web-quiz #5

Available 2pm Fri 5/25 – 5pm Mon 5/28

Week 10

Tu May 29 **Science, Technology and Media**

Guest Speaker: Mr. Robertson Allen: Video Gaming in Ethnographic Perspective

Franklin, "The Anthropology of Science"

Ginsburg, "Fieldwork at the Movies: Anthropology and the Media"

Th May 31 **What We Make Of All This & Where To Go From Here**

L&S Chapter 12, "Theory in Cultural Anthropology"

Course Wrap-Up

Final Examination:

Mon, June 4, 2007, 1030-1220

Location: [SMI](#) 120

Course Reader Contents:

- Geertz, Clifford. 2005 [1973]. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *Anthropology in Theory: Issues in Epistemology*, ed. Todd Sanders and Henrietta L. Moore. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1993. "Introduction: Grief and a Headhunter's Rage." In *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Pierpont, Claudia Roth. 2004. "The Measure of America: How a Rebel Anthropologist Waged War on Racism." *The New Yorker*, March 8.
- Farmer, Paul. 2003. "On Suffering and Structural Violence." In *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Agar, Michael H. 1996. *Language Shock: Understanding the Culture of Conversation*. New York: Harper Paperbacks.
- Becker, Howard S. 1993. "How I Learned What a Crock Was." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22: 28-35.
- Cohn, Carol. 1987. "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals." *Signs* 12(4):687-718.
- Dubisch, Jill. 2004. "You Are What You Eat: Religious Aspects of the Health Food Movement." In *Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology*, ed. Carol Delaney. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Messer, Ellen and Parker Shipton. 2002. "Hunger in Africa: Untangling Its Human Roots." In *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines*, ed. Jeremy MacClancy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sharp, Lesley. 2007. "The Good Death: Managing and Memorializing the Dead." In *Bodies, Commodities, and Biotechnologies: Death, Mourning, and Scientific Desire in the Realm of Human Organ Transfer*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gottlieb, Alma. 2002. "Interpreting Gender and Sexuality: Approaches from Cultural Anthropology." In *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines*, ed. Jeremy MacClancy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Seizer, Susan. 1995. "Paradoxes of Visibility in the Field: Rites of Queer Passage in Anthropology." *Public Culture* 8:73-100.
- Colen, Shellee. 2005. "'Like a Mother to Them: Stratified Reproduction and West Indian Childcare Workers and Employers in New York.'" In *Feminist Anthropology: A Reader*, ed. Ellen Lewin. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Gilsenan, Michael. 2002. "On Conflict and Violence." In *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines*, ed. Jeremy MacClancy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- MacClancy, Jeremy. 2002. "Paradise Postponed: The Predicaments of Tourism." In *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines*, ed. Jeremy MacClancy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bourgois, Philippe. 2002. "Understanding Inner-City Poverty: Resistance and Self-Destruction Under U.S. Apartheid." In *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines*, ed. Jeremy MacClancy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rhodes, Lorna A. 2002. "Psychopathy and the Face of Control in Supermax." *Ethnography* 3(4):442-466.
- Osanloo, Arzoo. 2004. "Doing the 'Rights' Thing: Methods and Challenges in Fieldwork in Iran." *Iranian Studies* 37(4):675-684.
- Yan, Yunxiang. 2001. "Practicing Kinship in Rural North China." In *Relative Values: Reconfiguring Kinship Studies*, ed. Sarah Franklin and Susan MacKinnon. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Harrison, Faye V. 2002. "Unraveling 'Race' for the Twenty-First Century." In *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines*, ed. Jeremy MacClancy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Chin, Elizabeth. 2005. "Ethnically Correct Dolls: Toying with the Race Industry." In *Feminist Anthropology: A Reader*, ed. Ellen Lewin. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Barker, Holly M. 1997. "Fighting Back: Justice, the Marshall Islands, and Neglected Radiation Communities." In *Life and Death Matters: Human Rights and the Environment at the End of the Millenium*, ed. Barbara Rose Johnston. Walnut Creek: Altamira.
- Franklin, Sarah. 2002. "The Anthropology of Science." In *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines*, ed. Jeremy MacClancy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ginsburg, Faye D. 2002. "Fieldwork at the Movies: Anthropology and the Media." In *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines*, ed. Jeremy MacClancy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.