Anthropology 324L (30420)

Ethnographic Theory and Practice

Spring 2016
T/Th 3:30 PM-5:00 PM, CLA 0.106

Professor Circe Sturm
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Office Hours: Thursdays 1:00-3:00 PM

Course Description

This course explores the complex relationship between anthropological ideas and ethnographic practice. The goals of the course are two-fold: (1) to introduce a broad spectrum of concepts, issues, and theories of culture, and (2) to critically examine how these theories and ideas shape anthropological methods and writings. To do this, we will read and critique five ethnographies on five different cultures, each with vastly different approaches to their respective subjects. In teaching, I use a combination of lecture and discussion, interspersed with various classroom exercises, films and creative writing assignments. We begin the semester by asking, “what is ethnography?” and “what is theory?” Eventually we address more complicated issues such as how the construction of an ethnographic subject is shaped by pre-existing or dominant ideas about culture and how scholarly, political and personal agendas shape research projects, fieldwork strategies and ethnographic texts. We conclude the course by assessing where the study of culture is today, and by writing our own brief, creative ethnographies.

Requirements

Because the course relies upon a blend of lecture and discussion, reading in advance is required. Students should arrive with questions and ideas, and be prepared to discuss readings in class. Students are also required to keep up with the key points presented in each class. If you are having difficulty with any of the ideas presented in class, then it is your responsibility to meet with other students or to attend my office hours to clarify course materials. Please use these opportunities to your advantage! The course also fulfills part of the writing requirements for the School of Undergraduate Studies at UT. Therefore, the course is writing-intensive and will require keeping up with writing assignments throughout the semester.

Grading and Assignments

You will be evaluated on the basis of (1) a mid-term and final exam; (2) three writing assignments; and (3) active participation in classroom exercises and discussion. Assignments will be due at the beginning of class and there will be no make-up exams, incompletes, or time extensions, except in the case of emergencies. The points for the course are assigned as follows:

1) Mid-term Exam (20 pts.) and Final Exam (20 pts.); format--objective and essay. You will need to bring a blue book to class on exam days. The final exam will be cumulative.
2) Writing Assignments: (a) a 3-4 page ethnographic observation paper (10 pts.); (b) a 3-4 page ethnographic representation paper (10 pts.); and an 8-10 page ethnography paper (25 pts.). More details will be given in class.

3) Classroom Participation (15 pts.): based on attendance, “keepers” exercise, reading quizzes, active engagement in discussion, staying up-to-date with writing assignments, and a willingness to lead discussion with thoughtful questions, observations and critiques.

**Readings**

**Books**


Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating their abilities should contact me personally as soon as possible so we can discuss the necessary accommodations to facilitate your full participation in the class.

*** I reserve the right to change or amend the course syllabus as necessary, primarily due to any unforeseen circumstances that may arise during the course of the semester. However, any changes in the syllabus will not adversely affect your grade or your workload. In other words, there will be no changes to the grading system and no additional assignments.

Relax and have a great semester!
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| January | T 19 Logistics and Introductory Remarks  
Cultural Theory & Ethnography | SSS pp. xv-xviii, Intro. & Ch. 1         |
|       | Th 21 Anthropology: What, Why, How?                                  | SSS Ch. 2 & 3                            |
|       | T 26 Fieldwork                                                        | SSS Ch. 4                                |
|       | Th 28 The Culture Concept                                             | SSS Ch. 4                                |
| February | T 2 American Historical School and Psychological Anthropology          | SSS Ch. 5 & 6                            |
|       | Th 4 Anthropological Ethics and Cultural Relativism in Practice-Discuss NSH | SSS prologue & pp. 296-328.            |
|       | T 9 Materialism vs. Idealism                                          | Respect Intro, Ch. 1 & 2                |
|       | Th 11 Marxism 101                                                     | Respect Ch. 3                            |
|       | **Observation Paper I Due**                                           |                                         |
|       | T 16 Structuralism                                                    | Respect Ch. 4                            |
|       | Th 18 Practice Theory                                                 | Respect Ch. 5                            |
|       | T 23 **Classroom Exercise on Interviewing**                           | Respect Ch. 6 & 7                       |
|       | Assign Paper II                                                      |                                         |
|       | Th 25 The Ethics of Witnessing and Writing “El Barrio”-Discuss Respect| Respect Ch. 8, 9 & Epilogue             |
| March  | T 1 The Interpretive Turn                                            | Lola pp. 1-49                           |
|       | Th 3 Race/Class/Gender Systems                                        | Lola pp. 50-109                         |
|       | T 8 Feminist Theories of Culture                                     | Lola pp. 110-169                        |
|       | Midterm Review                                                       |                                         |
|       | Assign Paper III                                                     |                                         |
|       | Th 10 **Midterm Examination**                                         | Lola pp. 170-270                        |
|       | 13-20 NO CLASS Spring Break                                           |                                         |
|       | T 22 What is Modernity?                                               | Lola pp. 272-328                        |
**Representation Paper II Due**

**April**

T 24  Assessing Vodou Anthropology/Discuss Lola

Lola pp. 330-381

T 29  Foucault

Lavie pp. 1-60

Th 31  The Postmodern Turn

Th 5  Crisis of Representation

Lavie Ch. 4 & 5

Th 7  **Follow-up Class Exercise on Representation**

Lavie Ch. 6 & 7

T 12  Alternative Textual Practices

Lavie Ch. 8 & 9

Th 14  Postmodern Backlash: Power and Materialism/Discuss Lavie

Lavie Interlude & Ch. 10

T 19  Catt Introduction & Ch. 1

Th 21  Peer Reviews of Paper III

Catt Ch. 2 & 3

**Rough Draft of Final Paper Due**

T 26  Auto-Ethnography and Memoir

Catt Ch. 4

Assign “Keepers” Exercise

Th 28  Where Are We Now?

Catt Ch. 5

Discuss “Keepers” & Fieldwork Experiences

**Keepers Exercise Due**

**May**

T 3  Discuss Cattelino

Catt Conclusion

Th 5  Final Exam Review

**Ethnographic Paper III Due**

TH 12  **Final Examination** 9:00 AM-12:00 PM

Reading Key:  SSS =  Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics  
Catt = High Stakes  
Lola = Mama Lola  
Lavie = Poetics of Military Occupation  
Respect = In Search of Respect