Cultural Anthropology (ANT 302) — Spring 2018

Lecture — Monday & Wednesday 11-12 pm, BEL 328

Instructor: James Slotta
Office: SAC 5.134
Email: jslotta@utexas.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-4 pm or by appointment

Discussion — All discussion sections are held in SAC 4.118

30605 - Friday 1-2
30610 - Friday 2-3

30580 - Friday 9-10
30595 - Friday 12-1

30600 - Monday 9-10
30615 - Wednesday 9-10

30585 - Tuesday 8.30-9.30
30590 - Thursday 8.30-9.30

University Course Description

The concept of culture; social and political organization; language; the supernatural; elementary cultural theory. May be counted toward the cultural diversity flag requirement. Meets core curriculum requirement for Social & Behavioral Science (I).

Detailed Course Description

This course provides an introduction to cultural anthropology, the inductive study of the human condition insofar as it is shaped by our social surround. Accordingly, anthropologists investigate humanity in all of its variety, developing methods of data collection and analysis, conceptual frameworks, and modes of presentation that are, ideally, adequate to capturing what it means to be human. In the process, cultural anthropology highlights the variability of humanity and, as a consequence, it forces us to rethink the nature of the human. What may appear to be natural or fundamental characteristics of humans (e.g., gendered characteristics) come to appear cultural and contingent once we start looking beyond our own social worlds.

In this course, we look at a wide range of cultural beliefs, values, and identities to understand: 1) how such cultural intangibles are produced and sustained in the course of people’s social lives and yet 2) how these cultural intangibles appear to be grounded in the very nature of reality for those enculturated to them. We focus on ritual in particular as a locus where beliefs, values, and other cultural intangibles palpably materialize in social life, connecting people in the mundane here-and-now to seemingly more primordial realms of reality.

Where the first half of the course seeks to situate cultural intangibles in social life, the second half looks at
how social life is rooted in these very values, beliefs, and the like. We consider social and political arrangements both familiar (the nation, class stratification) and unfamiliar (the patrilineal segmentary lineage, the matricentric virilocal residence group) to see how such arrangements are sustained and transformed in concert with cultural beliefs and values. We consider (Lockean) possessive individualism in particular as a cultural model of humans-in-society that increasingly shapes social, political, and economic arrangements around the world.

Ultimately, we aim to be able to bring anthropological methods to bear on our own lives to consider how we are embedded in and influenced by social, political, historical and cultural environments in ways that we often do not realize. We challenge our own beliefs about the nature of humanity and society, about the moral and immoral, about the valuable and valueless through careful attention to the wide diversity of ways in which humans live. How do humans construct their socio-cultural environment? What becomes striking about our own social lives when set alongside the social lives of others? What aspects of our socio-cultural surround are particularly potent in shaping the way we live?

More particularly, the course aims 1) to develop students’ ability to approach social life as “ethnographers”—that is, to empathize with people through careful attention to their social and cultural surround, and to recognize ourselves as part of particular social and cultural worlds; and 2) to develop the ability to read non-fiction prose—and anthropological writing, in particular—so as to be able to follow and critically appraise arguments, to evaluate and draw conclusions from evidence, and to empathetically engage with diverse forms of humanity through the written word.

Course schedule (subject to revision)

At the start of each week the thematic headings listed below most likely will not mean much to you. That’s okay. By the end of each week, the thematic headings for the week’s classes should be clear to you. That means you should be able to discuss how the readings relate to the issues mentioned in the thematic headings and how those issues relate to others we have discussed previously in class. If you find at the end of the week that you cannot do so, you should share your questions in class or make an appointment with me or your TA to discuss them during office hours.

Discussion sections will begin on Thursday, January 18 and end on Wednesday, May 2. There will be NO discussion sections from March 8 to March 21.

Days with a graded activity are marked with a **

1. What is Anthropology (Good For)? Applied & Theoretical Perspectives in the Study of Humanity

Jan 17 - Anthropology & Critique, Critique & (Our) Cultural Practices

- Locke: The Second Treatise of Government (paragraphs 4-21, 87-131)

2. Relativism, Rights, and Human Nature

Jan 24 - The Anthropological Critique of the Human Sciences & the Paradox of Anthropological Induction
- Benedict: *Patterns of Culture* (Chapter 1: pp. 1-10, Chapter 2)
- New York Times: Why Teenagers Act Crazy

**Jan 25—Jan 31: One question quiz in section on Locke and Benedict readings**

Jan 29 - Rights vs. Anthropological Understanding: Is the Anthropos in Anthropology the Human in Human Rights?
- Delaney: Seeds of Honor, Fields of Shame (start on p. 37 ‘The Locale’ and read the introduction last)
- New York Times: Turks Clash Over Defense of Virginity Tests
Jan 31 - Cultural Relativity & Sexual Promiscuity: Anything Goes?
  - Valeri: Kingship & Sacrifice (pp. 154-161)
  - Sahlins: Supplement to the Voyage of Cook (pp. 1-4, 9-26)

**Feb 1—Feb 7: One question quiz in section on Delaney, New York Times, Valeri, and Sahlins readings**

3. Anthropological Understanding in a Relative World: the Ethnographic Method

Feb 5 - The Natives’ Point of View: Ethnography & Anthropological Induction
  - Malinowski: Introduction - The Subject, Method, and Scope of this Inquiry (pp. 4-25)
  - Descola: The Spears of Twilight (Chapters 1 & 2)

Feb 7 - Ethnographic Projects Showcase

**Feb 8—14: One question quiz in section on Malinowski and Descola readings**

4. Where is the Natives’ Point of View?: the Manifestation of Values & Identities in Ritual

Feb 12 - Ritual: The Manifestation of Cultural Values and Social Identities in Space & Time
  - Barthes: The World of Wrestling

Feb 14 - Ritual Performativity: the Life of the Nation through an American Cult of the Dead
  - Warner: An American Sacred Ceremony

**Feb 15—Feb 21: One question quiz in section on Barthes and Warner readings**

Feb 19 - Ritual Performativity: Cockfighting and the Restoration of Cosmic Order in Bali
  - Bateson: Bali - The Value System of a Steady State (pp. 112-121 only)
  - Geertz: Deep Play - Notes on the Balinese Cockfight

Feb 21 - The Ritual Significance of Semen: Homosexuality or the Makings of Men in Papua New Guinea?
  - Elliston: Erotic Anthropology: “Ritualized Homosexuality” in Melanesia and beyond (First read the paragraph on p. 853 under the heading: “the Sambia: ‘ritualized homosexuality’ template.” Then, read pp. 848-850, 852-863)

**Feb 22-28: One question quiz in section on Bateson, Geertz, and Elliston readings**

Feb 26 - The Ritual Significance of Sex: Sex Roles & Gender Identities among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes
  - Kulick: Travesti (Introduction, Chapter 1-3)

Feb 28 - The Ritual Significance of Sex: Se Roles & Gender Identities among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes
  - Kulick: Travesti (Chapters 4-5)

**Mar 1—Mar 7: One question quiz on Kulick book**

Mar 5 - Midterm Review

**Mar 7 - Midterm Exam**

*No discussion sections Mar 8—Mar 21*
5. Gender, Identity, Kinship: Biological Nature or Social Role?

Mar 19 - Kinship Relations and Gender Identities Decomposed: Rights, Obligations, and Social Roles
   - Oboler: Is the Female Husband a Man?

Mar 21 - Kinship Relations and Gender Identities Composed: Mythical & Sociological Realities
   - Film: Masai Women

**Mar 22—Mar 28: One question quiz in section on Oboler and Film (Masai Women)**

6. Society Without the State: Kinship, Descent, and Polity

Mar 26 - The Segmentary Lineage as a Form of Political Organization
   - Evans-Pritchard: The Nuer of the Southern Sudan

Mar 28 - Cultural Principles & Social Conflict: the Tensions of Matrilineal Systems
   - Turner: *Schism & Continuity* (Chapter 3)

**Mar 29—Apr 4: One question quiz in section on Evans-Pritchard and Turner**

7. Society without the State: Obligations and the Gift

   Apr 2 - The Gift: Another Model of the “Birth” of Society
      - Mauss: *The Gift* (pp. 3-14, 33-46, 71-78)

   Apr 4 - Exchange, Status, and the Creation of Social Ties in Papua New Guinea
      - Film: *Ongka’s Big Moka*

**Apr 5—Apr 11: One question quiz in section on Mauss and Film (Ongka’s Big Moka)**

Apr 9 - Prostitution & the Exchange of Women in Papua New Guinea
   - Wardlow: *Wayward Women* (Chapters 1-3)

Apr 11 - Prostitution & the Exchange of Women in Papua New Guinea
   - Wardlow: *Wayward Women* (Chapters 4-5)

**Apr 12—Apr 18: One question quiz on Wardlow book**

8. Economy & Morality: The Social Distribution of Value & Values

Apr 16 - The Value(s) of Money
   - Hutchinson: *The Cattle of Money and the Cattle of Girls among the Nuer, 1930-83*

Apr 18 - You Are What You Eat: The Value(s) of Things & the Value(s) of People
   - Sahlins: *La Pensée Bourgeoise* (pp. 170-176, 179-185)

**Apr 19—Apr 25: One question quiz in section on Hutchinson and Sahlins readings**

Apr 23 - Myths of Identity and Acts of Identification in Colonial Situations  
- Memmi: *The Colonizer & The Colonized* (Part Two: selections)

Apr 25 - Myths of Identity and Acts of Identification in a Racial Caste System  
- Film: *OJ - Made in America*

**Apr 26—May 2:** One question quiz in section on Film (OJ) and Memmi

Apr 30 - The Power of Culture: Institutionalized Inequality and Self-Fulfilling Myths  
- Bourgeois: Crack in Spanish Harlem

May 2 - Final Review

**TBA - Final**

Course requirements and general policies

**Required Materials** — There are two books you will need to purchase at the bookstore:


All other readings are available electronically through Canvas at: https://utexas.instructure.com/

**An Advisory about the Readings** — Both of the books and several of the articles we will be reading this semester contain explicit accounts of sexual practices and sexual assaults. We will be approaching these materials—as with all of the materials discussed in this class—in an anthropological fashion. That means we work to empathize with the experiences of others and we discuss them in a respectful fashion. If you have concerns about the readings and the issues discussed in them, please speak with the instructor or a TA as soon as possible.

**Reading as an Anthropological Practice** — Though anthropologists typically spend some period of time doing research “in the field,” we gain access to other social and cultural environments largely through reading the accounts of other anthropologists. This course will be no different; we will glimpse other social worlds only through careful reading. That means paying close attention to the evidence we are presented with, the interpretation of that evidence, and the **claims** the evidence is used to support. Reading is not a passive activity, it is an argument that we are taking part in. We should train ourselves to constantly be outlining the argument of the readings and assessing the evidence and reasons supporting the argument. What is the **main claim** of the reading? What position is the author arguing against? What is surprising in the author’s account? Why did it surprise you? What **evidence** does the author supply to support this claim? Is it possible to interpret the evidence in a different way? What additional evidence would it be useful to have? As you do the readings, keep these question in mind.

As anthropologists, we are often confused by what we encounter in the field. In this course, we simulate that confusion by grappling with challenging data presented in articles and books written by anthropologists for other trained anthropologists. This course has no textbook. Our goal—through reading, lecture, and discussion—is to come up with anthropological interpretations of this data and to understand the larger anthropological issues and concepts raised by the data and its interpretation. You should treat the reading as a challenge, working to come to grips with the material presented with the help of our authors, the questions I provide to guide your reading, the lectures, and your discussion in sections. The aim is not just to help you become savvy readers of anthropological arguments, but to help you to become better readers more generally, closely tracking arguments that marshal evidence and reasons in support of contestable, surprising claims.
**Preparation for Class** — To assist your reading for each lecture, questions for each reading will be posted on the Canvas website. You should use these question to guide your reading; they point out the particular issues and data that you need ultimately to take away from the reading. I recommend that you do your best to answer these questions as you do the reading before class. You are welcome to work with classmates to develop your answers to these questions. Then, bring your answers along with the reading to the lecture, where the reading will be discussed further. Following the lecture, you should be comfortable answering the questions on the reading. Again, I encourage you to speak with your classmates about the answers to these questions before and after the lecture. If you are uncertain how to answer some of the questions, you will have the chance to ask questions during your discussion section. Section leaders are not there to provide answers to these questions, though they will facilitate discussion and ask questions that help you to answer the reading questions.

Most weeks at the end of your discussion section, you will have a quiz that consists of one of the questions on the previous week’s readings. At this point, if you have done the reading, attended lecture, worked with classmates to develop answers to the questions, raised any residual questions during your discussion section...at this point, it should prove easy to answer any of the questions from the previous week’s readings. Some of the reading questions will also appear on midterms and finals, so you are encouraged to retain your answers to these questions to review in preparation for these exams.

**Student Evaluation** — Your grade consists of four components:

- One-question quizzes: 35%
- Midterm: 25%
- Final: 30%
- Attendance & Participation: 10%

**One-question quizzes**: There will be 12 quizzes over the course of the semester and your lowest quiz grade will be dropped before calculating your final grade. Your 11 best quiz grades compose 35% of your final grade. These quizzes will consist of one reading question selected from the questions given out with the previous week’s readings. Different sections will not necessarily have the same question. Quizzes are closed book. You are allowed—encouraged, in fact—to discuss the questions ahead of time with classmates. Quizzes will be graded with either a check plus, check, check minus, or zero.

A **check plus** (= 96) is reserved for responses that are particularly thoughtful and draw connections to other readings or larger themes discussed in the class.
A **check** (= 86) is given for responses that offer a satisfactory but not particularly developed response to the question.
A **check minus** (= 76) is given for answers that are not, for the most part, satisfactory but show some familiarity with the reading.
A **zero** (=0) is given for missed quizzes and answers that show no familiarity with the reading.

**Midterm & Final Exams**: There will be midterm and final exams. The midterm will be given in class and the final will be during the assigned final slot for our class. You should not book tickets or make travel plans before finding out when our final exam will be held (see http://registrar.utexas.edu/students/exams). The midterm and final will consist of multiple choice, short answer, analysis, and mapping questions. The questions you are given with the reading for each class will form the basis of some exam questions as will the material covered in lectures. You are also responsible for being able to locate on a world map the country discussed in each of the readings. We will have review classes for both exams that will go over material from lectures that you should be prepared to answer questions on. The best preparation for exams is to: 1) work through the reading questions in the way described above and be able to identify on a world map the country discussed in the reading; 2) attend lectures and take notes, paying attention not only to answering the reading questions, but to other materials introduced in lectures that are not in the readings; 3) review your lecture notes and discuss them with classmates; 4) raise any questions you have about lectures during discussion section; 5) if questions remain after discussion section, raise your questions in office hours with me or your TA; and 6) attend the review sessions for the exams held during the lecture period prior to the exam. The midterm comprises 25% and the final 30% of your final grade.
**Attendance and Participation:** Regular attendance and participation in discussion sections accounts for 10% of your grade. Grades are given as follows:

- 96 - 2 or fewer missed section meetings with regular participation
- 91 - 2 or fewer missed section meetings
- 86 - 3 missed section meetings
- Etc. - An additional 5 points is taken off for every additional section meeting that is missed

The grade ranges are as follows. The highest possible numerical grade in the class is a 96. Decimal values will not be rounded up when calculating final grades.

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**Excused Absences & Make-ups** — The only absences that will be considered excused are for religious holidays and for extenuating circumstances due to an emergency (with a note from a doctor, nurse, or university official documenting the emergency). If you plan to miss class due to observance of a religious holiday, you must notify the instructor at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of the religious holiday. You will be given an opportunity to complete missed work within a reasonable time after the absence. Otherwise, there will be no make-up quizzes or exams without a note from a doctor, nurse, or university official excusing your absence.

**Inside & Outside the Classroom** — Readings for the day’s class should always be brought to class. I recommend that you print out readings available electronically on Canvas so that you are not dependent on electronic devices to do class readings. Computers, phones, and other electronic devices are allowed in class so long as they are not disruptive to others. If these devices become disruptive, I will ask that they not be brought into class. As long as these devices are not disruptive to others, you are solely responsible for how you use these devices in class. Your TA and I are not responsible for rehashing material that you miss because you are distracted by electronic devices or because you are absent (unless the absence is excused). If you miss a class, you should speak with your classmates to catch up on course announcements and notes. If you attend class and discussion section and still have questions about class materials, please see me or your TA during office hours. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are keeping up with all that is being done in class. Do not hesitate to ask questions in class or during office hours.

**Academic Integrity** — Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code:

“As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.”

This means that work you produce on assignments, quizzes and exams is all your own work, unless it is assigned as group work. You are welcome to work with classmates to prepare for quizzes and exams, but you may not help each other in any way while taking quizzes and exams. All quizzes and exams are closed book. Copying answers from any source during quiz or exam periods is a serious offense and you will be subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. You are responsible for understanding UT’s Academic Honesty Policy which can be found at the following web address: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php)

**Students with Disabilities** — Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259, [http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/](http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/)

- Please request a meeting as soon as possible for us to discuss any accommodations
- Please notify me as soon as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible
- Please notify me if any of the physical space is difficult for you
University Policies

Religious Holy Days — By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Q Drop Policy — If you want to drop a class after the 12th class day, you’ll need to execute a Q drop before the Q-drop deadline, which typically occurs near the middle of the semester. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information, see: http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/csacc/academic/adddrop/qdrop

University Resources for Students — The university has numerous resources for students to provide assistance and support for your learning. Use these to help you succeed in your classes.

The Sanger Learning Center: Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center’s classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

The University Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing. The assistance we provide is intended to foster students’ resourcefulness and self-reliance. http://wwc.utexas.edu/

The Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC) provides counseling, psychiatric, consultation, and prevention services that facilitate students’ academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being. http://cmhc.utexas.edu/

Student Emergency Services: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/

ITS: Need help with technology? http://www.utexas.edu/its/


Canvas help is available 24/7 at https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/student-tutorials


- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.
- Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050
- Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: utexas.edu/emergency.