Cultural Anthropology - Honors (ANT 302H [31115]) — Spring 2017

Tuesday & Thursday 2-3.30 pm, SAC 4.118

Instructor: James Slotta

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. To this end, 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 this course, we look at social formations both familiar (the nation, the nuclear family) and unfamiliar (the clan, the patrilocal residence group) alongside the cultural values and beliefs that motivate these social formations. We ask: where do values, beliefs, and identities “live”? What practices create, sustain, and transform these values and beliefs?

At the same time, we bring anthropological methods to bear on our own lives to examine 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 life of others? What aspects of our socio-cultural surround are particularly potent in shaping the way we live?

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 academic arguments—and anthropological arguments, in particular—that mobilize evidence and reasons in support of particular, “surprising” claims.

Course schedule (subject to revision)

At the start of each week the themes listed below most likely will not mean much to you. By the end of each week, the thematic headings for the week’s classes should be comprehensible to you, and you should be able to discuss how the readings relate to those themes and why these are important issues in anthropology. If you find at the end of the week that you cannot do so, you should raise your questions in class or make an appointment with me to discuss them during office hours.

All readings (except for the two books) and all reading questions will be available on Canvas: https://utexas.instructure.com/
Days with a graded activity due are marked with a **

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

1-17 - Anthropology & Critique, Critique & (Our) Cultural Practices

   - Locke - *The Second Treatise of Government* (Chapters 2, 3, 6 (87-94), 8 (95-99), 9)

2. Relativism, Rights, and Human Nature

1-24 - 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

1-26 - 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

1-31 - Cultural Relativity & Sexual Promiscuity: Anything Goes?
   - Valeri - Kingship & Sacrifice (pp. 154-161)
   - Sahlins - Supplement to the Voyage of Cook (pp. 1-4, 9-26)

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

2-2 - The Natives’ Point of View: Ethnography & Anthropological Induction
   - Malinowski - The Subject, Method, and Scope of this Inquiry (pp. 4-25)

**2-7 - Fieldwork: Where is the Native’s Point of View?
   - Descola - *The Spears of Twilight* (Chapters 1 & 2)
   - First Essay Due

4. Ritual: Cultural Values and Social Identities in Action

2-9 - Ritual: The Manifestation of Cultural Values and Social Identities in Space & Time
   - Barthes - The World of Wrestling
   - Warner - An American Sacred Ceremony

2-14 - The Ritual Life of Cosmic Realities: Concealing & Revealing Human Nature on Bali
   - Bateson - Bali: The Value System of a Steady State (pp. 112-121 only)
   - Geertz - Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight

2-16 - The Ritual Life of Semen: Homosexuality or the Makings of Masculinity in Papua New Guinea?
   - Elliston - Erotic Anthropology: “Ritualized Homosexuality” in Melanesia and beyond
2-21 - The Ritualistic Quality of Sex: Roles & Identities among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes
   - Kulick - Travesti (Introduction, Chapters 1-2)

2-23 - The Ritualistic Quality of Sex: Roles & Identities among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes
   - Kulick - Travesti (Chapters 3-4)

2-28 - The Ritualistic Quality of Sex: Roles & Identities among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes
   - Kulick - Travesti (Chapter 5)

**3-2 - Review
   - Second Essay Due

5. Gender, Identity, Kinship: Biological Nature or Social Role?

3-7 - Kinship Relations and Gender Identities Decomposed: Rights, Obligations, and Social Roles
   - Oboler - Is the Female Husband a Man?

3-9 - Kinship Relations and Gender Identities Legitimated: Mythical & Sociological Realities
   - Film - Masai Women

3-14/3-16 - NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

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

3-21 - The Segmentary Lineage as a Form of Political Organization
   - Evans-Pritchard - The Nuer of the Southern Sudan

3-23 - Cultural Values & Social Conflict: the Tensions of Matrilineal Descent
   - Turner - Schism & Continuity (Chapter 3)

7. Society without the State: Obligations and the Gift

3-28 - The Gift: Another Model of the “Birth” of Society
   - Mauss - The Gift (pp. 3-14, 33-46, 71-78)

**3-30 - Exchange, Status, and the Creation of Social Ties in Papua New Guinea
   - Film - Onka’s Big Moka
   - Third Essay Due

4-4 - Prostitution & the Exchange of Women in Papua New Guinea
   - Wardlow - Wayward Women (Chapters 1-3)
4-6 - Prostitution & the Exchange of Women in Papua New Guinea
   - Wardlow - Wayward Women (Chapters 4-5)

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

4-11 - The Value(s) of Money
   - Hutchinson - The Cattle of Money and the Cattle of Girls among the Nuer, 1930-83

4-13 - You Are What You Eat: The Value(s) of Things & the Value(s) of People
   - Sahlins - La Pensée Bourgeoise (pp. 170-176, 179-185)

9. Institutional & Cultural Orders of Power

4-18 - Inequality in the Creation & Distribution of Cultural Goods
   - Memmi - The Colonizer & The Colonized (Part Two: selections)
   - Bourgois - Crack in Spanish Harlem

4-20 - Identity and Identification in Colonial Situations
   - Film - Les Maîtres Fous
   - Film - OJ: Made in America

**4-25 - Identity and Identification in Colonial Situations
   - Film - OJ: Made in America (cont’d)
   - Film Discussion
   - Fourth Essay Due

4-27 - Reflexivity: Constructing People, Objectifying Culture, Legitimating Power
   - Clifford - Identity in Mashpee

5-2 - Writing Workshop

**5-4 - Final Essay Due
Course requirements and general policies

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

Kulick, Don. Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

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, please speak with me 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 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, and our discussion in class. 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 class session, questions for each reading will be posted on the Canvas website. You should use these questions 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 class, where the reading will be discussed further. Following class, 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 class. If you are uncertain how to answer some of the questions, please raise your questions in class. I am not here to provide answers to these questions, though I will facilitate discussion and ask questions that help you to answer the reading questions.
Student Evaluation — Your grade consists of three components:

- One-question quizzes/Participation: 33%
- 4 short (3-4 page) essays: \(10\% \times 4 = 40\%\)
- Final longer (6-8 page) essay: 23%
- Attendance: -1.5\% for every unexcused absence after the first one

**One-question quizzes:** There will be 8 pop quizzes over the course of the semester. These quizzes will consist of one reading question from the questions for the readings for that day’s class. 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, check plus, check minus, or zero. A check is given for responses that offer a satisfactory but not particularly developed response to the question. A check plus is reserved for responses that are particularly thoughtful: they draw connections to other readings or larger themes discussed in the class; they insightfully discuss data and its relationship to the question; they outline key parts of the argument made in the reading that are relevant to answering the question. A check minus is given for answers that are not, for the most part, satisfactory but show some familiarity with the reading. A zero is given for missed quizzes and answers that show no familiarity with the reading.

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There will be 8 quizzes over the course of the semester and your lowest quiz grade will be dropped before calculating your final grade. Your 7 best quiz grades compose 33\% of your final grade.

**Circumventing Quizzes with Participation:** If everyone in class participates in the day’s discussion there will be no pop quiz on that material at the end of class. This means that if everyone participates at least once in every class, there will be no quizzes the entire semester. In that case, everyone will receive an A for their quiz/participation grade. For every 3 class meetings in which everyone participates, there will be one less quiz given and everyone will receive an A for the quiz that has been dropped.

**Four Short Essays:** There will be four short (3-4 pages) essays throughout the semester that will receive a letter grade. I will provide a prompt asking you to compare readings we have recently completed using the concepts we develop in discussion. You will have about a week to complete each response and you are expected to prepare your essay on your own.

**Final Essay:** There will be a longer essay (6-8 pages) due the final day of class that will receive a letter grade. I will provide a prompt asking you to compare readings from throughout the semester using the concepts we develop over the course of the semester. You will have about a week to complete the final essay and you are expected to prepare it on your own.

**Attendance:** This course depends on your engagement and participation to succeed. You are permitted one unexcused absence during the semester. Every absence after that will result in a deduction of 1.5\% from your final grade.
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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<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79 (79)</td>
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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** — Computers, phones, and other electronic devices may not be used in class. You should be sure to print out readings for the day’s class so that you can reference them during our discussion. If you miss a class, you should speak with your classmates to catch up on course announcements and notes. If you attend class and still have questions about class materials, please see me 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 essays is all your own work, unless it is assigned as group work. You are welcome to work with and consult classmates to prepare for quizzes and, more generally, to get a better grasp on what is going on in the readings and the course. But you should prepare your essays on your own. Copying other people’s work or using their words or suggestions without acknowledgement 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

**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/

- 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 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://uwc.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/

• Libraries: Need help searching for information? http://www.lib.utexas.edu/

• 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.