

ANTH 101 – Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Professor: Valentina Pagliai
Oberlin College

M W F 11:00-11:50am

Office: King 320a
Phone: (440) 775-8372 office
(440) 250-9676 home
Office Hours: MWF 2-3
E-mail: valentina.pagliai@oberlin.edu

Course Description: This course introduces you to anthropology through the reading a series of ethnographic monographs. While presenting the diversity in the ways that humanity has organized its social institutions and cultural systems, the course will focus on “writing” examining the approaches through which cultures can be understood. The students will conduct their own fieldwork during the course, and they will themselves engage in “writing culture.” At the same time, we explore topics related to the study of cultural anthropology, such as the relations between economic systems and political systems; the meanings of “family ties;” and how individuals are both creatures of their culture and agents of their own lives. It explores patterns of global inequality -- by class, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality and nation. As we read through the ethnographies, we will encounter examples from small-scale societies to the contemporary U.S. and covering most continents. The class is discussion oriented, not lecture oriented.

Texts:

- 1) Landes, Ruth 1994 (1947). *The City of Women*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- 2) Mintz, Sidney W. 1985. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin.
- 3) Clastres, Pierre 1987 (1974). *Society Against the State*. New York: Zone Books.
- 4) Patton, Sandra 2000. *Birthmarks: Transracial Adoption in Contemporary America*. New York and London: New York University Press.
- 5) El Guindi, Fawda 1999. *Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance*. Oxford: Berg.
- 6) Olaniyan, Tejumola 2004. *Arrest the Music! Fela and His Rebel Art and Politics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- 7) A few additional readings are available in the “Materials” area of Blackboard.

Note: All Readings and Assignments are to be done by the date they are listed on the syllabus. All videos listed will be shown in class. It is generally a good idea to start reading each book plenty in advance of when it is due, to avoid having to read 100 pages at the last minute.

WEEK 1

M 2/7 -- Introduction. How anthropologists think about society. Preview of the course: goals, readings, requirements, grading.

W 2/9 – What is Ethnography? Theories and topics in anthropology.
Assignment (#1) Distributed

F 2/11 -- Ways of seeing. Ways of being seen (or being invisible). Arrivals

Readings: - Smadar Lavie pp. 3-26
- Dorinne Kondo pp. 3-26
- Ruth Landes "The City of Women" pp. 1-39.
1st Summary Due on today's readings.

WEEK 2

M 2/14 – Ways of seeing. Ways of being seen: Distant Mirrors

Video: "The Axe Fight" Tim Asch

1st part of Assignment #1 Due

Readings:

- Horace Miner "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema." P. 27-31
- Lowell Holmes & Ellen Rhoads Holmes "The American Cultural Configuration." p. 4-24.
- Janusz Mucha "An Outsider's View of American Culture." P. 37-43.

W 2/16 – Ways of Seeing. Ways of Writing: The Cinematic Other

Video by Trinh Min Ha

Readings:

- Trinh Minh-ha "The Totalizing Quest of Meaning" pp. 29-50
- Trinh Minh-ha "Mechanical Eye, Electronic Ear, and the Lure of Authenticity" pp. 53-62. In *When the Moon Waxes Red*.

2nd Summary due on: Miner, Holmes, Mucha & Trinh Minh-ha

F 2/18 – Ways of writing.

Readings: - Sally Cole "Ruth Landes in Brazil" In Landes' book. Pp. vii-xxviii.

WEEK 3

M 2/21 – Discussion: The City of Women – Studying race (or gender or religion)?

3rd Summary due on Cole & Landes pp.40-112.

Readings: - Landes pp. 40- (about) 112.

W 2/23 – Writing fieldnotes.

Assignment #1 Due

F 2/25 – Discussion: The City of Women – Understanding religion (or race or gender)?

Readings: Landes pp. 112- (about) 192.

WEEK 4

M 2/28 – Discussion: The City of Women – a travelogue?

Readings: - Landes pp. 192-248.

4th summary due on Landes (rest of the book)

W 3/2 – Economic systems, Colonialism and Globalization.

F 3/4 – Discussion: Sweetness and Power – Research at the crossroads of anthropology and history.

Readings: - Mintz pp. XV-XXX and 1-73

5th Summary due on Mintz (beginning to p. 73)

WEEK 5

M 3/7 – Discussion: Sweetness and Power – understanding the roots of world capitalism.

Readings: - Mintz, pp. 74-150 Consumption

W 3/9 – Discussion: Sweetness and Power – movements of goods movements of people: where, then, does culture lays?

Readings: - Mintz, pp. 151-214 “Power” “Eating and Being”

6th Summary due on Mintz (pp. 73-214)

F 3/11 – Transnationalism

Video: “Transnational fiesta”

WEEK 6

M 3/14 – Political systems and Power.

W 3/16 – Discussion: Society Against the State – What is power?

Deadline to select a topic for your final paper

Readings: - Clastres, pp.7-47

F 3/18 – Discussion: Society Against the State -- building a case ... the structuralist way.

Readings: - Clastres, pp. 49-99.

7th Summary due on Clastres on pp. 7-99.

WEEK 7

M 3/21 – Discussion: Society Against the State – “other” philosophies

Readings: - Clastres, pp. 101-150

W 3/23 – Discussion: Society Against the State – words and power

Readings: - Clastres, pp. 151-188.

F 3/25 – Discussion: Society Against the State. Society without state? What can difference reveal us?

Readings: Clastres, pp. 189-218.

8th Summary due on Clastres, p. 101 to end.

Assignment #2 Due

WEEK 8

- FALL BREAK

WEEK 9

M 4/4 – Race as Social Construct

Video Excerpts from: Race: The Power of an Illusion

W 4/6 – Racism and its social effects

Video Excerpts from: Race: The Power of an Illusion

F 4/8 – Racism and its social effects, continued

Readings: - Patton, pp. 1-27

WEEK 10

M 4/11 – The Meaning of Family. Discussion: Birthmarks.

Readings: - Patton, pp. 27-61

9th Summary due on Patton, pp. 1-61.

W 4/13 – Self, Personhood and Identity.

F 4/15 – Discussion: Birthmarks - Kinship & identity

Readings: - Patton, pp. 62-98

WEEK 11

M 4/18 – Discussion: Birthmarks

Readings: - Patton, pp. 99-129

W 4/20 – Discussion: Birthmarks

Readings: - Patton, pp. 130-167

10th Summary due on Patton, p. 62 to end.

F 4/22 – Gender and Sexual Identities

Readings: - El Guindi, pp. 3-22.

WEEK 12

M 4/25 – Discussion: Gender and Colonialism

Readings: - El Guindi, pp. 37-46

W 4/27 – Discussion: Veil – Status and Gender

Readings: - El Guindi, pp. 97-128

11th Summary due on El Guindi (parts read through today)

F 4/29 – Religion. Discussion: Veil

Readings: - El Guindi, pp. 129-145.

WEEK 13

M 5/2 – Discussion: Veil -- Resistance

Readings: - El Guindi, pp. 161-185.

12th Summary due on El Guindi (p. 97 to end)

Assignment #3 Due.

W 5/4 – The meaning of art.

F 5/6 – Discussion: Arrest the Music!

Readings: - Olaniyan, pp. 1-49.

13th Summary due on Fela, pp. 1-49.

WEEK 14

M 5/9 – Discussion: Arrest the Music!

Readings: - Olaniyan, pp. 50-107.

W 5/11 – Discussion: Arrest the Music!

Readings: - Olaniyan, pp. 145-190.

14th Summary due on Fela, pp. 50 to end.

F 5/13 – Final discussion: writing, meaning making, and anthropological responsibility.

FINALS' WEEK

Final Paper Due: Thursday May 19th at 7pm

Course Policies:

Code of honor

The Oberlin College Students' Code of Honor applies to the course, please familiarize yourself with it: http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html

Readings should be completed by the day they are listed on the syllabus; this will help you follow lectures and prepare for lectures and section.

Summaries are due at the beginning of the class session. They must be typed, about 500 words long. Summaries and other assignments must be turned in on time at the beginning of class. They will be graded down 1 point for each day that they are late. Each summary is graded on a scale of 1 to 10 and it is worth 1.78% of the final grade.

Participation to class Discussions is fundamental. Everybody is expected to participate actively to class discussion every time the class meets and as time allows. “Active participation,” means speaking during discussions (at least most of the time), having questions prepared for potential discussion for every class, and getting to know your fellow classmates by name, major, etc. Merely attending class does not constitute active in class participation.

Presence in class is expected, and I will take the roll at the beginning of each class. Students present at the roll will receive 1 point. Students who are late may not be recorded.

Grades:

Assignment #1 (exchange of perspectives)	5 % of final grade
Assignment #2 (First draft)	5 %
Assignment #3 (Second draft)	10 %
Final Paper	25 %
Summaries	25 %
Class presentations	10 %
Participation (discussions and presence in class)	20 %
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	100 %

A+ = 96% of grade; A = 93%; A- = 90%; B+ = 86%; B = 82%; B- = 78%; C+ = 74%; C = 70%; C- = 60%; NE = Less than 60%; D = 55%; F = Less than 55%.

Final Note: Although the syllabus will be followed as much as possible, it is intended as a guideline and circumstances may require a change to the schedule. Students are responsible for any changes announced in class.