

PEOPLES AND CULTURES
ANTHROPOLOGY 1101-02 (Fall 2012)
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Northeastern University
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30-11:35am
Richards Hall 300

Instructor: Adam M. McGee
Adjunct, Sociology and Anthropology, Northeastern University
Doctoral candidate, African and African American Studies
Harvard University

Office: 530 Holmes Hall

Office Hours: Mondays, 11:45am-1pm

E-mail: amcgee@fas.harvard.edu

Grader: Erica Bushell (bushell.e@husky.neu.edu)
Doctoral candidate, Sociology and Anthropology
Northeastern University

This course is an introduction to the discipline of Socio-Cultural Anthropology. Using diverse readings, as well as film and audio, the course emphasizes the role that anthropology has played in shaping our understanding of common ideas such as culture, class, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, and globalization. While presenting information about the history of the discipline, it encourages students to think critically (and sometimes skeptically) about anthropological truth-claims. The course also takes a hard look at the ways that anthropology has sometimes played a role in creating and supporting colonial regimes and racist ideologies—yet has also helped to dismantle them. Most importantly, the course encourages students to consider how anthropology can help us better understand our lived experiences, particularly of love, aesthetic pleasure, spiritual longing, economic stratification, sickness, aging, mortality, loss, violence, dislocation, ecological imbalance, foreignness, and radical change. Examples are drawn from the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania, and many places in between.

Required texts

The majority of the readings for the course are available on the course website as PDFs, organized by class date under the Course Material > Course Documents menu. If you are having trouble accessing the course website through myneu.neu.edu, please contact your instructor and University IT.

In addition, the following three books are required. They are available at the campus bookstore, or online for less. Please pay special attention to getting the correct editions.

1) Thomas Hylland Eriksen. *Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*, Third Edition (New York: Pluto Press, 2010).

2) Paul Rabinow, *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco: Thirtieth Anniversary Edition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), paperback.

3) Karen McCarthy Brown. *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*, Third Edition with a new foreword by Claudine Michel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

Assignments and grading

Assigned readings are listed for the class in which they will be discussed, meaning they should be completed *by* that class meeting. The following assignments will together make up the course grade. Please note that late work submitted without prior written approval will drop 2 grading increments per day that it is late, starting with the first day. In other words, an assignment due at the beginning of class but turned in later that day could not receive higher than a B+, the next day a B-, the following day a C, etc.

Pop quizzes (20%): Administered periodically throughout the semester at the beginning of class meetings. Students who regularly attend lectures and do the assigned readings will find these to be an easy way to boost their grade.

Ethnography assignment (20%): Students will be asked to attend a campus event of their choosing (concert, lecture, sporting event, etc.), then write a short report (2 pages maximum) analyzing the event from an ethnographic/anthropological perspective. More detailed instructions will be distributed and discussed in class. DUE THURSDAY, SEPT. 27 AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS. More detailed instructions will be distributed at the beginning of the prior week.

Take-home midterm exam (20%): The take-home midterm will be open notes, based on all of the readings and lectures up to that point. It will be DISTRIBUTED THURSDAY, OCT. 18 AND DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NEXT CLASS MEETING, MONDAY, OCT. 22.

Take-home final exam (20%): The take-home final will be open notes, based on all of the readings and lectures from the course. It will be DISTRIBUTED ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASS AND DUE MONDAY, DEC. 10.

Final project -- Group Wiki (20%): Students will be assigned to smaller group during the second half of the semester and tasked with creating an informative Wiki on the course website that goes more deeply into a topic from the course. More detailed instructions will be distributed later in the semester. DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14.

Attendance

Attendance at all lectures is mandatory. While attendance cannot be taken in a class of this size, pop quizzes administered during the course of the semester will serve as a form of attendance-taking, while also checking to guarantee that students are keeping up with assigned readings. Only students with excused absences will be allowed to make up a missed pop quiz. To receive an excused absence, the instructor must be contacted *prior to* the start of the missed class with the reason for the absence and, if relevant, documentation.

Classroom etiquette

Technology is an ever-present draw on our attention. During this course, I will be modeling some responsible uses of technology in the classroom, such as showing films, Youtube clips, and webpages with instructional content. Likewise, I welcome students to use their computers and smartphones in the classroom as long as these devices are being used responsibly to take notes, refer to readings and the course website, look up unfamiliar words or concepts, etc. However, please reserve emailing, texting, chatting, Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, Pinterest, Stumbleupon, Gawker, BuzzFeed, clothes shopping, lolcats, etc. etc. etc. for the hours of the day when you aren't in class. You think I don't know, but I do.

Academic integrity

All Northeastern students are bound by the terms of the NU Academic Integrity Policy. Plagiarism is passing off all or part of someone else's work as your own. This encompasses both excerpts from texts and the original ideas in those texts. Most plagiarism occurs accidentally, when you don't keep track of your sources. That's why it is important to keep good records of what sources you have used, and to consistently use a standard citation method when writing. Northeastern University Libraries has a helpful website that offers tips for how to avoid plagiarism.

<http://library.northeastern.edu/get-help/research-tutorials/avoid-plagiarism>

If you still aren't sure, or you're worried, please ASK your instructor. All cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution; proven cases will result in a final course grade of F. More compellingly, you don't want your parents and grandparents coming to your college graduation to watch your proud day when you know that part of your degree was earned by cheating.

Other

Students with serious health concerns, disabilities, or other learning-related challenges are encouraged to contact the Northeastern University Disability Resource Center (617-373-2675; 20 Dodge Hall; <http://www.northeastern.edu/drc/index.html>) to gain accommodations (such as approval for extended absences from class) and confidential assistance.

Students dealing with challenges related to school and life may seek assistance through Northeastern University Health and Counseling Services (617-373-2772; Forsyth Building, Suite 135; <http://www.northeastern.edu/uhrs/index.html>).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1:

- Wed, Sept 5 **Course introduction and review of syllabus**
- Thurs, Sept 6 **What is cultural anthropology?**
Chapters 1, 3, & 4 (pp. 1-9, 27-61) in Eriksen's *Small Places, Large Issues*
Horace Miner, "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema" [course website].

Week 2:

- Mon, Sept 10 **The origins of cultural anthropology**
Chapter 2 (10-26) in Eriksen's *Small Places, Large Issues*
- Wed, Sept 12 **Cultural relativism**
Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?: Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others" [course website].
Laura Bohannon, "Shakespeare in the Bush" [course website].
- Thurs, Sept 13 **The anthropologist in the field: ethnography and fieldwork**
Paul Rabinow, *Reflections on Fieldwork on Morocco*, Chs. 1 & 2 (pp. 1-30)

Week 3:

- Mon, Sept 17 **The anthropologist in the field, cont.**
Rabinow, *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*, Chs. 3 & 4 (pp. 31-100)
- Wed, Sept 19 **The anthropologist in the field, cont.**
Rabinow, Chs. 5 & 6 (pp. 101-130)
Claire Sterk, "Tricking and Tripping: Fieldwork on Prostitution in the Era of AIDS" (online)
- Thurs, Sept 20 **A social animal: Society and kinship**
Ch. 5-8 (62-131) in Eriksen
David W. McCurdy, "Family and Kinship in Village India" [course website].

Week 4:

Mon, Sept 24

Marriage

Linda S. Stone, "Gay Marriage and Anthropology" [course website].
Melvyn C. Goldstein, "When Brothers Share a Wife" [course website].

Wed, Sept 26

Language

Film: *American Tongues*, clips
Ch. 15 (pp. 220-238) in Eriksen
David S. Thompson, "The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis: Worlds Shaped by Words" [course website].

**ETHNOGRAPHY ASSIGNMENT DUE IN PRINTED FORM
AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS, THURSDAY, SEPT. 27**

Thurs, Sept 27

Language, cont.

Film: *We Still Live Here*

Week 5:

Mon, Oct 1

Language, cont.

Visit from members of the Wôpanâak (Wompanoag) Language Reclamation Project

Wed, Oct 3

Human interactions with natural environments

Basso, Keith H. "Wisdom Sits in Places: Notes on a Western Apache Landscape" [course website].

Thurs, Oct 4

Women and sexual difference

Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" [course website]

Week 6:

Mon, Oct 8

COLUMBUS DAY -- NO CLASS

Wed, Oct 10

Alternative sexualities

Ellen Lewin, "Who's Gay? What's Gay?: Dilemmas of Identity Among Gay Father" [course website].

Thurs, Oct 12

Alternative genders

Film: Clips from *Of Men and Gods* and *Paris is Burning*
Karen McCarthy Brown, “Mimesis in the Face of Fear: Femme Queen, Butch Queens, and Gender Play in the Houses of Greater Newark” [course website].

Week 7:

Mon, Oct 15

Ethnicity

Chapters 17 & 18 (pp. 275-307) in Eriksen’s *Small Places, Large Issues*

Wed, Oct 17

African American culture and anthropology

Film: *Herskovits and the Heart of Darkness*

Thurs, Oct 18

Anthropology and racism

Lee D. Baker, *Anthropology and the Racial Politics of Culture*, Ch. 4: “The Cult of Franz Boas and His ‘Conspiracy’ to Destroy the White Race” (156-219) [course website].

**TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DISTRIBUTED AT END OF CLASS
AND DUE IN PRINTED FORM AT BEGINNING OF CLASS, MON., OCT. 22**

Week 8:

Mon, Oct 22

Religion

Ch. 14 (pp. 220-238) in Eriksen
Geertz, Clifford. “Religion as a Cultural System,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (online)

Wed, Oct 24

Religion, cont.

Film: Kramer’s *Legacy of the Spirits*
Karen McCarthy Brown, *Mama Lola*, Introduction and Chs. 1-4

Thurs, Oct 25

Religion, cont.

Mama Lola, Chs. 5-8

Week 9:

Mon, Oct 29 **Religion, cont.**
Mama Lola, Chs. 9-12, Afterward, Foreword to the 2010 Edition, and
Preface to the 2001 Edition.

Wed, Oct 31 **Religion, cont.**
Film: *Hell House*

Thurs, Nov 1 **Witchcraft, magic, divination**
Jackson, Michael. “The Man Who Could Turn into an Elephant”
from *Paths Toward a Clearing* [course website].
Jackson, Michael. “How to Do Things with Stones” [course
website].

Week 10:

Mon, Nov 5 **Class, economics, the marketplace**
Chs. 10-13 (pp. 150-219) in Eriksen
Allen Johnson, “In Search of the Affluent Society” [course website].

Wed, Nov 7 **Anthropology of hurt bodies**
Sharp, Lesley A. “Organ Transplantation as a Transformative
Experience: Anthropological Insights into the Restructuring
of the Self” [course website]

Thurs, Nov 8 **The aged body**
Film: Barbara Hyerhoff’s *Number Our Days*

Week 11:

Mon, Nov 12 VETERAN DAY OBSERVED – NO CLASS

Wed, Nov 14 **Ethnomusicology: The Anthropology of Music**
Elizabeth McAlister, *Rara! Vodou, Power, and Performance in Haiti and
Its Diaspora*, selections [course website]

Thurs, Nov 15 **Ethnomusicology, cont.**
Film: *The Other Side of the Water*

Week 12:

Mon, Nov 19

Foodways: Food Anthropology

Richard Borshay Lee, "Eating Christmas in the Kalahari" [course website].

Richard Wilk, *Home Cooking in the Global Village: Caribbean Food from Buccaneers to Ecotourists*, selections [course website]

Wed, Nov 21

THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS

Thurs, Nov 22

THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS

Week 13:

Mon, Nov 26

Globalization and the long arm of modernity

Film: *First Contact*

Jackson, Michael. "First Contact" in *Minima Ethnographica* [course website].

Wed, Nov 28

Globalization, cont.

James L. Watson, "Introduction: Transnationalism, Localization, and Fast Foods in East Asia" in *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*, pp. 1-38 [course website].

Thurs, Nov 29

Dislocation, social upheaval, and violence

Malkki, Liisa. "Speechless Emissaries: Refugees, Humanitarianism, and Dehistoricization" [course website].

Week 14:

Mon, Dec 3

Dislocation, social upheaval, and violence, cont.

Jackson, Michael. "Violence and Intersubjective Reason" and "Custom and Conflict in Sierra Leone: An Essay on Anarchy" [course website]

Wed, Dec 5

Dislocation, social upheaval, and violence, cont.

Jackson, Michael. "Storytelling Events, Violence, and the Appearance of the Past" [course website]