

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology Anthropology 101

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Background: Anthropology is the study of humans.

Anthropologists will study anything if it is related to humans.

Cultural anthropology is concerned with humans' cultures.

Cultures differ in complicated ways.

The course, then, is an introduction to the study of culture and cultural differences.

One of the challenges of anthropology is to understand and explain such differences, but there is also a need to seek common ground—understanding what all humans share despite their differences. What you will learn by the end of the course is that people differ, but given the proper analytic tools, it is possible to understand differences as well as recognize the ways in which everyone is alike.

General Education Requirements: This course fulfills three general education requirements. Through its discussion of cultural anthropological methods and techniques for studying social systems, and the relationship of anthropology to other disciplines that study humans, this course fulfills the “Analyzing Social Structures” PLAS area requirement. Because this course engages in discussions of cultures and societies from around the world, and discussions how social and cultural differences are created, it fulfills the “World Cultures” context of experience requirement. Finally, since the course involves detailed and extensive discussions of societies with non-industrial economic foundations, it fulfills the “pre-industrial society” extended requirement.

Readings: There are three required books in this class. All the books are available at the bookstore. You are expected to complete the required readings for each date before coming to class. Recommended readings are optional readings that will provide additional information and insight.

In many cases, the assigned reading will not be discussed in class, and much of the material covered in class will not be found in the books. Therefore, it is essential that you do the readings and attend class.

Required books:

All of these books are available in paperback!!!

Descola, Philippe

1993 The Spears of Twilight. New York: The New Press.

McHugh, Ernestine

2001 Love and Honor in the Himalayas. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Hinton, Alexander

2005 Why Did They Kill? Berkeley: University of California Press.

Office Hours: T/Th 10:30-11:30

Course Requirements: Your course grade will be determined as follows:

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Midterm 1: | 20% |
| Midterm 2: | 20% |
| Final exam: | 35% |
| Class participation: | 25% |

The midterms will be held in class on the days specified in the outline of the course. The final exams will be in accordance with the date and time specified in the Schedule of Classes.

Every exam is cumulative and will draw on materials from lectures and the books.

Your class participation grade is based on contributions made in class and section. Sometimes, these contributions will be in the form of short written tasks that are turned in during class. Such assignments you receive an "A" for completing, and they cannot be made up. Attendance influences your ability to contribute in class. If your attendance is good, then your class participation grade will be the same or better than the average of the grades you receive on the exams. If you participate in class discussions, then your class participations grade will be better than your average exam grade. Poor attendance, frequent tardiness, or being disruptive to the class can have a negative effect on your class participation grade.

Make-up policy: Make-up exams are available for the midterms. Make-up exams are different from the in-class exams, and might contain short essay questions. **If you need to take a make-up exam, it is up to you to talk to the instructor to make arrangements within two weeks of the day the midterm was given, otherwise you might not be allowed to take a make-up.** If you miss a make-up exam, or if you request to make-up more than one exam, you will be required to provide documentation justifying the privilege of taking a second make-up.

With regard to make-ups for the final exam, no early final exams will be given. **If you miss the final exam, you must notify the instructor by Friday, December 21 of your need to take a make-up exam and to arrange for an incomplete, if necessary.** Failure to do so results in a 0 on your final exam. *I do not give ABS grades.*

A make-up exam is a privilege, not a right. If you miss an exam, it is your responsibility to do what is necessary to take a make-up.

Extra credit: There are optional assignments (exam follow-ups) and improvement bonuses with which students can improve their grades. Such work is designed to improve performance in the course. No other extra credit work will be considered.

Papers: There are no papers in this course.

Course Outline:

1. What is Anthropology and Why Does Anybody Care?
2. How to do anthropology and the quandary of relativism
required reading:
Descola, chapters 1 through 4
recommended reading:
Descola, Prologue
3. Human nature, more or less
required reading:
Descola, chapters 6 and 7
4. Ecology: Foraging and Horticulture
Required reading:
Descola, chapters 8 and 9
5. Family and Marriage
required reading:
Descola, chapters 11 and 12
6. Exchange: Reciprocity and Redistribution
required reading:
Descola, chapters 15 and 16
7. Acephalous Politics: Power, Authority, and Legitimacy and the art of Feuding in societies with no government
required reading:

Descola, chapters 17 and 18

8. Shamanism and Feuding

required reading:

Descola, chapters 19, 20, and 21

9. Shamanism and Religion

required reading:

Descola, chapters 23 and 24

10. Review

11. MIDTERM EXAM

12. Kindred, Lineage, and Clan

McHugh, chapters 1 and 2

recommended reading:

McHugh, Preface

13. Unilineal Descent Systems

required reading:

McHugh, chapters 3 and 4

14. Choosing a Spouse: residence patterns and cousins

required reading:

McHugh, chapter 5

15. Concluding Kinship

required reading:

McHugh chapter 6

16. Religion and Ritual

required reading:

McHugh, chapters 7 and 8

Last day to turn in first midterm exam follow-up

17. review

18. MIDTERM EXAM

19. Intensive Agriculture, Industrialism, Price Market Exchange, and Capitalism

required reading:

Hinton, introduction

20. Capitalism, States and Social Stratification: Justice, Authority, Organization, and Ideology

required reading:

Hinton, Preamble to section one, chapter 1

21. Social Stratification and Power: Patron-client relationships and exploitation

required reading:

Hinton, chapter 2

22. Caste and Race

required reading:

Hinton, chapter 3

23. The meanings of Thanksgiving

required reading:

Hinton, chapter 4

24. Race and Ethnicity: The Invention of Tradition

required reading:

Hinton, chapter 5

25. Subjectivity and Inter-Subjectivity

required reading:

Hinton, chapter 6

26. Concluding remarks on Hinton

required reading:

Hinton, conclusion

27. Something from my research (music or time)

no required reading

last day to turn in follow-up for second midterm

28. closing comments

no required reading

Kevin Birth graduated from the University of Rochester in 1985 after majoring in Anthropology, and Religious and Classical Studies. He entered the Ph.D. program in anthropology at the University of California at San Diego the following fall. From 1989 through 1991 he conducted field research in a cocoa-producing area of rural Trinidad. In 1993, he received his Ph.D. and

began teaching at Queens College. He has returned to Trinidad twice: in 1996 and 1998. His publications include several articles on concepts of time Trinidadian music, kinship, and ethnicity, and the books Any Time is Trinidad Time, and Bacchanalian Sentiments. He has also served on the board of directors for the Society for Psychological Anthropology, and on the editorial staff of Anthropology News, the trade newspaper received by members of the American Anthropological Association.

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Anthropology 101

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Office hours: Tues 1:30-3:00 & Fri 12:30-1:00
email: john.collins@qc.cuny.edu

Professor John Collins
Office: Powdermaker 315G
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INTRODUCTION: This is an introduction to anthropology, a discipline concerned with what it is to be human. As a result, practically anything you imagine may fall within our areas of interest this semester. Be careful! Be ready! And, please, think hard and enjoy yourself.

21st century North American Anthropology is typically conducted in relation to four subdisciplines, or fields of study. These include 1) human origins (biological anthropology, or paleoanthropology and primate studies); 2) the prehistoric past, or those periods in human history that lack extensive written archives or require the analysis of material evidence (archaeology); 3) the ways that people live, know, and organize themselves in the present or recent past (social or cultural anthropology, also called ethnology) and 4) the ways people communicate or make sense of their worlds linguistically and semiotically (linguistic anthropology).

Over the course of the present semester we will concentrate on social and cultural anthropological approaches to human unity and diversity, with some attention to linguistic anthropology. Our readings are drawn from four ethnographies (*an ethnography is a written compilation of experiences drawn from the community, institution, or group of people studied*). The first is an examination of a group of foragers in southern Africa. The second focuses on histories and the politics of race and culture in contemporary Brazil. The third comes closer to home by exploring street vending and social control in Manhattan. And the fourth is a study of immigration, worldviews, and health and sickness in the interactions between North American medical professionals in a California public hospital and Hmong families from Southeast Asia.

As exemplified by the range of very different ethnographies we will read this semester, anthropology is a diverse field. I encourage you to think about differences and similarities in each author's approach to their subjects and to the practice of ethnography. In doing so you should become aware that anthropology is not simply the study of primitive, simple, or marginal peoples. Rather, it is a way of seeing, being in, and representing a world constantly in transition even as it may be united by certain shared traits and experiences.

PLAS REQUIREMENTS: Anthropology 101 is an introduction to the history and development of anthropological methods and thought as well as social science more generally. It emphasizes global diversity, cross-cultural knowledge, primary source documents, and ongoing systems of change and difference across space and time. This course fulfills the QC "Analyzing Social Structures," "World Cultures" and "Pre-Industrial Society" general education requirements.

REQUIRED READINGS: (Books Available at Queens College Bookstore)

Duneier, Mitchell. 2000. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux. ISBN: 0-374-52725-3

- Fadiman, Anne. 1997. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux. ISBN: 0-374-52564-1.
- Downey, Greg. 2005. *Learning Capoeira: Lessons in Cunning from an Afro-Brazilian Art*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 0-19-517697-1.
- Shostak, Marjorie. 2000. *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 0-674-00432-9. (Make sure to get the Harvard Press version)

COURSEPACK AVAILABLE AT IVER PRINTING (67-03 Main St., Flushing, tel 718-275-2070)
You are expected to complete the required readings for each class before coming to lecture.

In many cases the reading will not be discussed in detail in lecture. And much of the material covered in class cannot be found in the texts we read. Therefore, it is essential that you do the readings *and* attend class while thinking about how the two both overlap and differ. There is no assigned textbook. But the thick coursepack full of articles will be of great value to you over the course of the semester.

REQUIREMENTS: Regular attendance; prompt completion of all written and oral assignments; *two* (2) midterms and a final exam, and respect for your fellow students and QC codes of conduct.

GRADING: Your grade will be computed as follows,

| | |
|----------------------|-----|
| Midterm 1: | 15% |
| Midterm 2: | 30% |
| Final exam: | 35% |
| Class participation: | 20% |

It will be impossible to receive a top grade without attending regularly and completing reading assignments. “Participation” means engaging with the materials and your classmates in a thoughtful and considerate manner.

EXAMS: Your first midterm will take place on **October 2**, your second on **November 21**, and your final as **scheduled by the Registrar**. The second midterm and the final are both *cumulative* exams.

NON-EXAM ASSIGNMENTS: There will be occasional quizzes, short homework assignments, and other in-class activities developed during the term. These include written assignments (short essays). Such activities will not necessarily be announced in advance and *they will count as an important part of your class participation grade. They cannot be made up if you miss class.*

MAKE-UP POLICIES: It is your responsibility to contact me and to arrange to make up work missed. If you need a make-up exam *you must speak to me within 5 working days* of the exam date. If you do not do so there is *no guarantee* that you will be able to make it up, *even with a valid excuse*. (The make-up will be substantially different from the exam given to the rest of the class.) You should be prepared to forego taking a make-up if you do not provide documentation outlining the reasons for an absence.

If you miss the final exam you must contact me within 48 hours (either side) of the scheduled exam time and arrange for an incomplete, if necessary.

FILM AND VIDEO: Film and video make up an essential part of the course material. This will be reflected in section assignments and on the exams. It is your responsibility to view any film that you have missed. This may involve traveling to other libraries within the CUNY or NYC system!

CONTACTING YOUR PROFESSOR: The best way to reach your professor is by email. *Phoning at any time except during office hours is not a very fast or efficient method.* If you need to leave a note/materials for me, please use my mailbox in the Anthro Office, Powdermaker 314.

--- CLASS SCHEDULE ON NEXT PAGE ---

NOTE: The professor reserves the right to alter any and all parts of this syllabus at his discretion as the term progresses.

CLASS SCHEDULE

| <u>DAY</u> | <u>DATE</u> | <u>TOPIC</u> | <u>READING ASSIGNMENT</u> |
|-------------------|--------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Tuesday | 8/28 | Introductions | ----- |
| Friday | 8/31 | Cultural Anthropology and Ethnography | Malinowski, "Introduction"* |
| Tuesday | 9/4 | Theories of Culture and Society | <i>Nisa</i> , Intro + Ch. 1 & 2 |
| Friday | 9/7 | Film: <i>N'ai</i> | <i>Nisa</i> , Chs. 3-5 |
| Tuesday | 9/11 | Foraging Societies: Economy and Politics | <i>Nisa</i> , 6-9 |
| Friday | 9/14 | NO CLASSES SCHEDULED AT QC | <i>Nisa</i> 10 |
| Tuesday (Friday!) | 9/18 | Sex, Sexuality, and Gender | <i>Nisa</i> , 11-12 |
| Friday (Friday!) | 9/21 | NO CLASSES SCHEDULED AT QC | Finish <i>Nisa</i> |
| Tuesday | 9/25 | Marriage + Kinship | <i>Coursepack</i> |
| Friday | 9/28 | Review | <i>Study Hard, Study Well</i> |
| Tuesday | 10/2 | First Midterm Exam!! | <i>Study Well, Study Hard</i> |
| Friday | 10/5 | Film: <i>Sugar Cane Alley</i> | <i>Capoeira</i> , 1-37 |
| Tuesday | 10/9 | <i>Sugar Cane Alley</i> + Capitalism and Colonialism | <i>Capoeira</i> , 38-73 |
| Friday | 10/12 | Commodities and People | <i>Capoeira</i> 74-101 |
| Tuesday | 10/16 | Sense and Sensibilities | <i>Capoeira</i> , 102-168 |
| Friday | 10/19 | Race and Ethnicity | <i>Capoeira</i> , 169-211 |
| Tuesday | 10/23 | Writing and Representing | <i>Sidewalk</i> , 3-42 |
| Friday | 10/26 | "Cultures of Poverty"/Culture and Poverty | <i>Sidewalk</i> , 43-111 |
| Tuesday | 10/30 | Law and Social Institutions | <i>Sidewalk</i> , 112-154 |
| Friday | 11/2 | Space and Sociability | <i>Sidewalk</i> 155-187 |
| Tuesday | 11/6 | Language and Culture | <i>Sidewalk</i> , 188-228 |
| Friday | 11/9 | States, Stratification, and Social Control | <i>Sidewalk</i> , 231-289 |
| Tuesday | 11/13 | The Social Construction of Decency | <i>Sidewalk</i> , 293-330 |
| Friday | 11/16 | Review | <i>Study Hard, Study Well</i> |
| Wed (Tues @ QC) | 11/21 | Second Midterm Exam | <i>Study Well, Study Hard</i> |
| Friday | 11/22 | NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY | <i>Relax</i> |
| Tues | 11/27 | Film, <i>Threads of Survival</i> | <i>Spirit</i> , 1-4 |
| Friday | 11/30 | Health and Illness | <i>Spirit</i> , 5-9 |
| Tuesday | 12/3 | Migration and Transnationalism | <i>Spirit</i> , 10-14 |
| Friday | 12/6 | Magic, Religion, and Rites of Passage | <i>Spirit</i> , 15-19 |
| Tuesday | 12/10 | Closing Comments | |

Final, Extra Review Session, TBA

Final Exam as Scheduled Officially by Queens College Registrar. Don't Miss it. And Don't Be Late!!

A User's Guide for teaching Anthropology 101 at Queens College

Anthropology 101 as “Infomercial”

Most of the students who take anthropology 101 are in their first year of college. They have never taken anthropology before, and many of them don't know what it is—the simply choose it because it fulfills general education requirements, and since it begins with “A” was early in the list of courses open to freshmen.

So we view one of the missions of the course as an infomercial on anthropology—a means to inform students about cultural anthropology and entice them to take more anthropology.

Anthropology 101 as “Introduction”

It is worth knowing the “culture” of anthropology 101 at Queens College. For us, cultural anthropology is distinctive in how it strives to represent diverse cultures and how it is grounded in field research. Consequently, we hope that students come out of anthropology 101 understanding what we do as cultural anthropologists and recognizing the wonderful diversity of human behavior and traditions.

Also, anthropology 101 potentially introduces many concepts of great use in our upper division courses. These concepts include the following:

- The culture concept
- Anthropology as a holistic discipline (the 4-fields)
- Cultural relativism
- Political systems
- Modes of subsistence
- Economics and exchange
- Kinship
- Religion
- Culture and gender
- Culture and sexuality
- Race and ethnicity

While this list reads a bit like the table of contents to an introductory textbook, many of us experiment with how we discuss these topics, and try to find new ways to weave them together. We find that the use of good ethnographies is often a means of building links between topics. At the same time, some of us (not all) find that textbooks can give students a sense of structure to the course that is valuable. However you approach the course, we do encourage you to read intro textbooks and look at sample syllabi to get a sense of the different ways to approach the course.

Ethnographic nuggets:

A common pedagogical technique we employ is to use ethnographic cases to discuss conceptual issues. What follows is a list of some of the ethnographic examples people have used at Queens to discuss important concepts:

Evans-Pritchard's chapter "The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events" from his *Witchcraft, Magic and Oracles Among the Azande* works really well in 101. I use it in a section I call "The Cultural Construction of Reality" which includes analysis of religion, but is a bit broader. The work by E-P is a great illustration of how he came to understand the logic of witchcraft and discovered that it was less divergent from European notions of causality than he originally thought.

Keith Basso's "'To Give Up on Words': The Use of Silence in Apache Culture" or almost anything from his *Western Apache Language and Culture* is good for talking about language and worldview.

Gananth Obeyesekere's "Depression, Buddhism and the Work of Culture in Sri Lanka" from Kleinman and Good, eds., *Culture and Depression* works well for talking about the cultural relativity of mental illness and, more broadly, emotion.

Miskito Indians and Guarani—the different ways in which capitalism disrupts other modes of production. For the Miskito, the turning of turtles into commodities, and for the Guarani, how land ownership disrupts shifting cultivation. These articles tend to show up in Spradley and McCurdy readers.

The Nuer—segmentary systems and acephalous societies. E-P's treatment of how a society without a government can function is flawed, but still useful.

Highland New Guinea mokas/NW coast Native American Potlatch—how giving can be negative reciprocity.

Nayar—matrilineal lineages with polyandrous conjugal relations evolving into bilateral kindreds and monogamous nuclear families in responses to political and economic change—wonderfully complicated. Most of this is taken from Kathleen Gough's work.

Sambia ritualized homosexuality—rites of passage and cultural construction of sexuality. Gilbert Herdt's ethnography *Guardian of the Flutes* is worth reading, but a summary of these rituals can be found in the edited volume *Rituals of Manhood*.

Kula ring—reciprocity and exchange. Malinowski's work is classic, and Weiner's reinterpretation allows one to add dimensions of gender, if one wishes.

Kilts, bagpipes, and the Scottish invention of tradition—from the Ranger and Hobsbawm volume.

Zuñi man-woman (Berdache)—cultural construction of gender in relationship to cosmology. Paul Roscoe has written on this.

American gender slang—cultural construction of gender

Books/readings that have worked well:

Sometimes, picking a good ethnography for this course is a challenge, in addition to the information mentioned above, below are a few books that faculty have noted as useful. We encourage you to pick your own books, but here are some of our experiences with some of the books we've used. In general, ethnographic books that contain case studies and strong narrative structures tend to work well.

This list is not very long—we have only begun to work on this guide. We wish we had more to suggest right now.

McHugh—Love and Honor in the Himalayas. This is a wonderfully written, engaging book about the Gurung of Nepal with a strong narrative structure that leads readers through the topics of gender, emotion, kinship, religion, and death/mortuary rituals.

Descola—Spears of Twilight. This is about the Achuar of Ecuador. It also consists of strong narrative structures that deal with issues of gardening, trade, acephalous politics, feuding, and shamanism.

Holland and Eisenhart--Educated in Romance. A book about cultural conceptions of gender at American universities. Asks the question why so many young women enter college with high SATs, high grades, and high career ambitions, but end up not as academically successful as they were in high school and with lowered career ambitions. This book is particularly relevant in the wake of the Harvard president's remarks.

Wolf--House of Lim. This is good for kinship, gender, etc.

Books that do not work so well:

In general, we have found that the books that do not work well are ones that are too advanced for students who have never been exposed to anthropology—such books have too much theory in them to be accessible enough to intro students.

Briggs—Never in Anger. The reason this book did not work is possibly because the author does not come across as a sympathetic figure.

Lan—Guns and Rain. The interaction of politics and kinship in this book is a bit too complicated and ambitious for intro.

College policies that possibly make no sense:

1. Attendance cannot determine a grade. Instead, attendance can only be one of several things considered in a “class participation” grade.
2. There are three grades that can be assigned if a student does not finish the course:
 - WU—the student has not completed most of all of the course work.
 - ABS—a grade given at your discretion if the student has missed the final examination and has contacted you, and still has a chance of passing the course. This is a temporary grade, and if you assign it you will be asked to be in charge of the make-up work and evaluation. The work must be completed by the end of the following semester, and students must pay \$15 to the Bursar to receive their grade.
 - INC—a grade given at your discretion if the student is missing some of the course work, has contacted you, and still has a chance of passing the course. For you, the responsibilities are the same as with an ABS, but students do not need to pay for their grade.Advice: if you assign an INC or ABS also require students to sign an agreement stating a date by which they promise to complete the work. Otherwise, students have a tendency to crawl out of the woodwork a couple of days before the registrar-imposed deadline and make your life miserable.

Practical matters:

1. State your policy on make-up exams in your syllabus, and stick to that policy. Keep in mind that you are responsible for proctoring your make-up exams.
2. The college does provide support for using scantrons. If you want to give multiple choice exams that use scantron forms, you can pick up the forms at data-processing (down the hall from the bookstore). There are two forms. The small form you run through the machine yourself, the large form you turn over to data-processing to scan and provide you with a report.
3. Photocopies of syllabi and tests should be made by Reprographics, not in the department. Shakiela and Tricia, the department’s administrative staff, have the forms required to submit materials to reprographics for photocopying. You should allow at least one week for both syllabi and tests.
4. If you want to put materials on reserve, you can put physical copies on reserve, or you can use electronic reserve and have the materials posted on-line. Information on reserve’s policies can be found at <http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/Library/>
5. It is always wise to go to the college bookstore to see if the books you have ordered are in.
6. If you teach in Powdermaker or in lecture halls in Kiely, you will need to receive training to use the audio-visual and computer technologies in those rooms. The number to call to set up this training is 718-997-5960.
7. The department has a limited number of laptops and projectors that can be used for teaching (and ONLY for teaching). Make arrangements to use these through the chair (Sara Stinson)

8. The department has a collection of videos that includes many classics.
9. If you show a video in your class, and students miss the showing, they can make it up in the department. You make arrangements through Shakiela, the department secretary.