

**Anthropology 101**  
**Introduction to Cultural Anthropology**

**II. Criteria for Perspectives Courses**

**Justification**

Please describe how the course will address criteria for Perspectives on the Liberal Arts courses. Be sure to include an explanation of the course's specific learning goals for students to make a connection between these and the general criteria for Perspectives courses.

Anthropology 101 provides students with both a history of the development of anthropological thought and multiple case studies that illustrate how anthropologists engage real world issues around the world. At the center of this effort lies cultural anthropology's core method, namely the production of ethnography through field research that involves participant observation, interviews, and surveys. Participant observation calls for just that, a "participatory" relationship to knowledge of social worlds as constructed by human beings. And given this emphasis anthropologists typically maintain a type of double consciousness in which they are simultaneously aware of their own academic, disciplinary engagements even as they produce knowledge about epistemological systems that may be quite unlike their own. The result is a bifocal approach that positions anthropology in relation to other social sciences and the humanities even as, on the basis of cross-cultural research, it uncovers alternative ways of knowing. This means that as students learn about anthropological methods that distinguish the discipline from related fields like psychology, sociology or political science, they will also come to understand that anthropology's global, comparative and participatory means of addressing social structure reveal the existence of change over time and across space. As a result, Anthropology 101 is historically and geographically comparative and predicated on engagements with difference. The ethnographies read by students in Anthropology 101 are primary source documents that attest to the human diversity around which anthropologists produce new knowledge. Thus Anthropology 101 turns on considerations of diversity and the nature and construction of forms of difference.

**Criteria Checklist**

Please be sure that your justification addresses all three criteria 1-3, below. For criteria 4-8, please check all that apply and discuss these in your justification.

A Perspectives course must:

1. Be designed to introduce students to how a particular discipline creates knowledge and understanding.
2. Position the discipline(s) within the liberal arts and the larger society.
3. Address the goals defined for the particular Area(s) of Knowledge the course is designed to fulfill.

In addition, a Perspectives course will, where appropriate to its discipline(s) and subject matter:

- X 4. Be global or comparative in approach.
- X 5. Consider diversity and the nature and construction of forms of difference.
6. Engage students in active inquiry.
7. Reveal the existence and importance of change over time.
8. Use primary documents and materials.

### III. Course Materials, Assignments, and Activities

Please provide an annotated list of course readings and descriptions of major assignments or exams for the course, as well as distinctive student activities that will engage students in working toward the course goals discussed in the course description and/or justification.

Please include the author and title for each reading or text, along with a short description providing information about how the reading will contribute to course goals.

Students are typically expected to complete three exams (2 midterms + a final) as well as a variety of short exercises, quizzes, and short writing assignments both inside and out of class. But the most central aspect of the course is the reading of ethnographies which develop the sort of engagement with the cross-cultural and historically specific productions of knowledge described above. Among the ethnographies read regularly in Anthropology 101 are:

1. 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.

This book introduces students to culturally distinct systems of curing and ideas about health and well-being. It is also an examination of migration, the geopolitical fallout from the Vietnam war, the relationships between ethnic minorities and national states, bureaucratic institutions and the North American health system.

2. Price, Richard. 2006. *The Convict and the Colonel*. Durham: Duke University Press.

This book, written by a respected anthropologist who, at the end of his career, combines autobiography with a historical reconstruction of the life of an informant and the development of a popular uprising in early twentieth century Martinique, brings home to students anthropologists' interests in how knowledge is produced in the interfaces between researcher as knowing subject and fieldsite as an object of contemplation. It requires that students think especially hard about how history is produced, the role of power and specific institutions in such writings, and the role of coercive labor and colonialism in establishing what may be said and known about ostensibly shared pasts.

3. Shostak, Marjorie. 2000. *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

This is a classic ethnography of African hunter-gatherers' lifeways. Read alongside films like *N'ai*, which details the changing sociopolitical context in which the book's subjects, the southwestern African people known as the !Kung, find themselves, *Nisa* is an excellent introduction to radically different ways of composing families, social institutions, and individual personhood.

4. Descola, Philippe. 1993. *The Spears of Twilight*. New York: The New Press.

This is an ethnography about the Achuar of Ecuador. The Achuar are an acephalous society in which kinship, marriage, shamanism, and feuding are essential components of their political system. In addition to covering these topics, the book offers an excellent discussion of foraging and horticulture in the rainforest. Since the Achuar are a group that occupies a territory containing huge petroleum reserves, they occasionally make the news for their efforts to defend their rights and traditions.

5. Holland, Dorothy; and Eisenhart, Margaret. 1990. *Educated in Romance*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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.

6. McHugh, Ernestine. 2001. *Love and Honor in the Himalayas*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

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.

7. Kulick, Don. 1996. *Travesti: Sex, Gender and Culture Among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

This book examines the lifeways of transgendered Brazilians by focusing on the relationship between desire and identity. It is thus an exploration of both models of western subjectivity and theories of interpersonal engagement along the lines of G. W. F. Hegel's *Phenomenology* as well as a discussion of sexual politics and everyday life in contemporary Brazil.

#### **IV. Assessment**

Perspectives courses must be recertified every five years, and we are seeking ideas for how to best carry out this assessment. What forms of evidence that the course is meeting its goals as a Perspectives course would be appropriate to collect for this course during the next five years? How would you prefer assessment to be conducted? How might evidence of effective teaching and student learning be collected and evaluated?

Regularly scheduled examinations during the course itself are one, longstanding form of assessment. Additionally, we propose that we test, **via a written assessment vehicle, all** students entering our Anthropology 201 ("Essentials of Cultural Anthropology"—a core course taken by all majors). **This will involved short answer questions** on a number of concepts that we expect **students** to take away from an Anthropology 101 conceived of as a PLAS course **in the category "Analyzing Social Structures"** while introducing students to the ways Anthropology produces knowledge, situating that knowledge production within the social sciences and liberal arts more generally, and addressing world cultures and pre-industrial societies.

#### **V. Administration**

What process will your department develop to oversee this course, suggest and approve changes, and conduct assessment? Who will be in charge of this process? Also indicate whether the course will be primarily taught by full-time or adjunct faculty, or by a combination of the two types of instructor.

This course will be overseen and assessed during regularly scheduled meetings between the Department Chair, the three members of our standing Curriculum Committee, and individual instructors. The Curriculum Committee Chair will be in charge of this process. In addition, the Curriculum Committee has prepared a guide to new faculty who teach the course that describes the goals of the course that the department will continue to periodically revise. Although the course may be taught by adjunct faculty, its core teaching force is, and will continue to be, drawn from the ranks of full-time tenured and tenure track Anthropology faculty.