Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Fordham University – Lincoln Center
ANTH-1100, Summer 2018
TWTh 9:00 - 12:00pm
Location TBD

Professor: Goutam Gajula
Office Hours: By Appointment
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Course Description

“Anthropology is often considered a collection of curious facts, telling about the peculiar appearance of exotic people and describing their strange customs and beliefs. It is looked upon as an entertaining diversion, apparently without any bearing upon the conduct of life of civilized communities. This opinion is mistaken. More than that, I hope to demonstrate that a clear understanding the principles of anthropology illuminates the social processes of our own times and may show us, if we are ready to listen to its teachings, what to do and what to avoid.”

- Franz Boas, “Anthropology and Modern Life,” 1928

This course provides an introduction to the anthropological study of culture through examination of key objects, analytic problems, and methodologies of the discipline. Drawing on historic and contemporary ethnographies, intra-disciplinary debates, films, and theory, this course surveys and evaluates the ways in which anthropology has engaged the human condition. Key topics include the culture concept, relativism, knowledge and belief, rationalities, representation, gender and sexuality, race, nature, biology, and globalization. This course aims to equip students with foundational critical and analytic skills to further their anthropological studies, as well as better interpret and understand what it means to be human in a world of difference that surrounds and binds us.

Course Texts

The following book is required for the course and may be purchased at Fordham University Barnes & Noble (113 W. 60th at 9th Ave.):


Remaining required readings include articles and book chapters will be available electronically through Blackboard.
Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation
You are expected to come to class having completed the assigned readings and prepared to engage the class with questions, observations, objections, and arguments. Missing class is not acceptable except in the case of scheduled or emergency medical issues, which must be accompanied with a medical note. Each unscheduled absence will result in a half-grade drop (i.e. B to B-, etc.). Students who are absent two times or more will fail the course.

Classroom Ethics
- Mobile phones: All phones must be turned off (not silent/vibrate) during class. You must request permission if for whatever reason you must keep your phone turned on and set to vibrate.
- Food and drink: Be respectful to your fellow students and university staff. Do not let your eating or drinking become disruptive and clean up after yourselves.
- Punctuality: Arrive on time.

Completion of Readings
As this is an accelerated summer course, reading assignments will be approximately 75 pages per class session. Students are expected to bring a copy of articles (or notes) to class, having completed the readings and being prepared to discuss them. To facilitate close reading and discussion, I will provide reading guidelines by email prior to class.

Reading Responses
Students will submit a response of approximately 1 page to a prompt that I will provide at the end of each class. Responses are due daily by email by 5pm.

Midterm Short Paper
Students will write a 3-5 page paper, due by email on 06/15 on a topic that I will provide.

Final Exam
The final exam will be distributed on the last day of class (06/28) and will be due on 06/29 by 5pm by email. The exam will be open-book and cumulative. The exam will consist of short essays that will test your completion and comprehension of readings, as well as your ability to put readings in conversation with one another.

Grading
- Participation: 15%
- Reading Responses: 40%
- Midterm Short Paper: 15%
- Final Exam: 30%
Submission of Assignments
All assignments are due by email to ggajula@fordham.edu. Assignments should be sent as *.pdf files, if possible. You are solely responsible for ensuring that emailed assignments are received and that files are readable.

Late Work
Submissions of any assignments after the due date-time are subject to deductions. If you have an emergency or other extenuating circumstance that forces a late submission of an assignment, you must contact me.

Academic Ethics
You will be strictly held to the Fordham University code of conduct. At a minimum, you will receive an “F” on any work that involves academic misconduct, and you may very well fail the course, depending on the circumstances.

Office of Disability Services
If you are a student with a documented disability and require academic accommodations, you need to register with the Office of Disability Services for Students (ODS) in order to request academic accommodations for your courses. Please contact the main ODS office at Rose Hill at 718-817-0655 to arrange services. Staff at ODS can walk you through the process and arrange appointments depending on which campus you take courses at. Accommodations are not retroactive, so you need to register with ODS prior to receiving your accommodations. Please see me after class or during office hours if you have questions or would like to submit your academic accommodation letter to me if you are already registered for accommodations with Fordham.
Schedule of Readings

05/29  **Welcome and Introduction**  
Thomas H. Eriksen, “Why Anthropology?”  
Peter A. Metcalf, “Death Be Not Strange”  
Richard B. Lee, “Christmas in the Kalahari”  
Laura Bohannon, “Shakespeare in the Bush”

I.  **The Birth of Anthropology**

05/30  **Social Evolution**  
Herbert Spencer, “Progress: Its Law and Causes” [excerpt]  
Lewis Henry Morgan, “Ancient Society” [excerpt]  
Raymond Corbey, “Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930”  
Josh Cole, “Cultural and Racial Stereotypes on the Midway”  

05/31  **Boas and “Culture”**  
Franz Boas-Otis Mason Exchange on ‘Similar Inventions in Areas Widely Apart’  
Franz Boas, “The Limitations of the Comparative Method” and “The Aims of Ethnology”  
Ruth Benedict, “The Science of Custom” and “The Diversity of Cultures”  
Claudia Roth Pierpont, “The Measure of America; How a rebel anthropologist waged war on racism”

II.  **Methods**

06/05  **Fieldwork: the “native’s point of view”?**  
Bronislaw Malinowski, ”Introduction” and “Essentials of the Kula” in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*  
Clifford Geertz, “I-Witnessing: Malinowski’s Children”  
Begin reading Elenore Smith Bowen, *Return to Laughter* (complete by 6/12)  
In-Class Film: *Off the Verandah* (1985)
06/06  **Understanding: Witchcraft, for example**
E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft and Sorcery among the Azande* [selections]
In-class Film: *Witchcraft among the Azande* (1982)

06/07  **Interpretation: Turtles All the Way Down**
Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description”
Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Sorcerer and His Magic”
Stacy Leigh Pigg, “The Credible and the Credulous: The Question of ‘Villagers’ Beliefs’ in Nepal”

06/12 **Ethics: Power and Position**
Michel Leiris, “The Ethnographer Faced with Colonialism”
Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Quest for Power” and “A Little Glass of Rum”
Renato Rosaldo, “The Erosion of Classical Norms”

06/13 – 06/14  **Elenore Smith Bowen, Return to Laughter**
06/14  **Midterm take-home exam distributed due by 5pm on 6/15**

### III. Anthropology as Cultural Critique

06/19  **Economies**
Marcel Mauss, Forward (by Mary Douglas) and Chapters I, II, and IV from *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*
Karl Marx, “The Fetishism of the Commodity”
In-class Film: *Ongka’s Big Moka* (1976)

06/20  **Gender and Sexuality**
Sherry Ortner, “Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?”
Gilbert Herdt, "Rituals of Manhood: Male Initiation in Papua New Guinea"
In-class Film: *Guardians of the Flutes* (1994, BBC)
06/21  Ethnocentrism
Jamaica Kincaid, “A Small Place” [excerpt]
Vincanne Adams, “Suffering the Winds of Lhasa: Politicized Bodies, Human Rights, Cultural Difference, and Humanism in Tibet”

06/26  Globalization
Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, “Beyond “Culture”: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference” [excerpt]
Birgit Meyer, “Commodities and the Power of Prayer: Pentecostal Attitudes towards Consumption in Contemporary Ghana”
Carla Freeman, “Designing Women: Corporate Discipline and Barbados’s Off-Shore Pink-collar Sector”

06/27  Futures
Anna L. Tsing, The Mushroom at the End of the World [selections]

06/28  Review
Distribution of Final Exam, due by 5pm on 6/29