

**UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
ANTHROPOLOGY 1025G/003**

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Meeting Time: Wednesdays: 7:00-10:00pm **Room:** KB K106

Instructor: Dr. Linda Howie

Email: lhowiela@uwo.ca

Office: SSC 3415

Office Hours: Wednesday, 5:00-6:00 (or by appt.)

Teaching Assistant: David Levine

Email: dlevine5@uwo.ca

Office: SSC 3301

Office Hours: TBA

COURSE CONTENT:

Welcome to Introduction to Cultural Anthropology!

This course provided an introduction to cultural anthropology, as a field of study, its foundational concepts, and its applications. A central aim of anthropological research is to understand other cultures and to communicate that understanding based on the data gathered through fieldwork and participant observation. A main focus of this course is examining the ways in which cultural anthropologists document and seek to understand global diversity in the human experience. We will explore anthropological perspectives on such cultural features as language, economics, marriage and family, gender, political systems, cultural identities and religion. A main objective is to broaden our understanding of human diversity as observed in cultures around the world, including our own.

Each class is three hours long and will include a 2 hour lecture and at least one 10 to 15 minute break. A range of different activities will be conducted during the third hour of class. These activities include:

- a film illustrating or dealing with the concepts and information presented in the accompanying lecture and assigned reading
- a variety of class-based group discussion exercises, both informal and structured

Essential Reading

Main Text:

- Miller, Barbara, Penny Van Esterik and Joan Van Esterik (2010) *Cultural Anthropology* (available at the bookstore AND as an e-book).

Group Discussion Readings (available at Course Reserves in Weldon Library) :

- Boehlke, Jennifer (2009) Kinds of Talk: Juicing Clients in Tattoo World. In *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, edited by James Spradley and David Mc Curdy. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., pp.69-78.
- Condry, Ian (2009) Japanese Hip-Hop and the Globalization of Popular Culture. In *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, edited by James Spradley and David Mc Curdy. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., pp. 365-384.
- Gmelch, George (2009) Baseball Magic. In *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, edited by James Spradley and David Mc Curdy. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., pp.310-319.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy (2009) Mother's Love: Death Without Weeping. In *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, edited by James Spradley and David Mc Curdy. New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc., pp.176-186.

Learning Objectives

1. Contribution to knowledge base

The main objective of this course is to introduce you to the fundamental terminology, concepts, theories and investigatory frameworks used by anthropologists to study human culture and society and to communicate their understanding of it. This information can be thought of as the 'nuts and bolts' of this field of study. It is intended to provide you with a solid knowledge base about research in cultural anthropology, not only for interest's sake alone, but also upon which you can continue to build through future courses focussing on more specific topics or areas of research.

2. Development of writing skills

As with other fields in the Arts, Pure and Applied Sciences, and Social Sciences, the main way information and ideas about 'things anthropological' are presented and disseminated is through written essays and reports. Accordingly, the ability to communicate ideas and information in written form, both clearly and effectively, is not only a great asset, but a necessary skill. This course will enable you to continue to develop good writing skills through two short, editorial-type written assignments and a research project.

The aims of the short assignments are:

- to provide you with an opportunity to communicate in writing your own ideas, opinions and observations regarding a particular issue or topic
- to provide you with detailed feedback on your basic writing skills (grammar, sentence and paragraph construction, proper word usage, logic of your arguments etc.), in terms of what you are doing well and what you could improve on.

The aims of the research project are to provide you with an opportunity to:

- conduct some anthropological field work
- synthesize information (in writing) with regard to what you did and observed, within the context of previous scholarship on the topic
- build and present written arguments for and/or against a particular interpretation, or comparing and contrasting competing points of view (or interpretations)
- present relevant information, arguments and ideas in an organized, clear and coherent manner, with reference to the source of specific ideas, information or opinions.

Note: the level of feedback you will receive on the research project will depend on when you hand it in (see below).

3. Development of oral communication skills

The ability of effectively communicate your ideas and opinions orally is also an important skill. It goes without saying, however, that some people like to talk more than others, and individuals can feel more or less comfortable talking to (or in front of) people they do not know, for a variety of reasons. It is my belief that the communication and the sharing and exchange of ideas and opinions in a scholarly setting are as important and essential as reading about them and listening to them. In this course you will have the opportunity to communicate your thoughts and ideas through group discussions. These will include small group discussions, class-wide discussions and question and answer sessions involving the whole class. The 'class participation' portion of the final course mark is intended to acknowledge your willingness and effort to attend class on a regular basis and to share your thoughts and opinions in the group discussions. It also acknowledges efforts made to come to class prepared to discuss the course material and to participate. (e.g. your ability to participate will often depend on whether you have done the assigned reading).

Since the sharing and exchange of ideas should ALWAYS be a positive experience in an academic setting, I ask that you **please remember the following:**

- **although our opinions might vary, we are ALL entitled to have an opinion**
- **although eloquence does vary, so does people's perception of it**
- **always be respectful and courteous to fellow class members (after all, you would expect the same from them)**

4. Development of critical thinking

Over the past decade, work and information relating to anthropological research have seen ever increasing amounts of exposure. Think, for example, about 'Reality TV' programs: do they not enable to the viewer to observe the day-to-day experience of 'others', who he/she is curious about? Is this not just a kind of 'new age armchair anthropology' for the masses? If so, then what are the biases inherent in presenting people's lives in this manner, and is this problematic considering the aim is 'entertainment'?

A central objective of this course is to encourage you to question what you read, what you view, and what you think you already know about a particular issue. Instead of simply accepting what has been written or said, and simply holding on to current understandings, this course will provide you with an opportunity to think critically about a range of topics and issues relevant to contemporary life. Here are some basic questions that form the basis of 'critical thinking'. Keep them in mind when confronting new information and material:

- **What** is being said? In other words, what is the argument being put forward? YOU should be able to summarize it in a few words.
- **Who** is conveying this message in terms of their cultural position and background, if knowable?
- **When** was it written? Does the fact that this message is from a particular historic era compared to contemporary times affect its content?
- **Why** is the message being conveyed? Why would someone choose to convey a particular message? What might be the "interests" behind the message?
- **What is the evidence?** What kinds of data are used and are they adequate?

- *Is the **argument sound**?* On the basis of the above questions, YOU as a reader will be in a better position to accept or reject a claim or argument.

COURSE MARKS:

Final grades will be based on the marks achieved on two short writing assignments, a research project, a midterm written exam, a final written exam and a class participation assessment. Relevant dates and the weighting of each assessed component are as follows:

Assessed Component of Final Grade	Due Date	Percent of Final Grade
Short writing assignments (there are 2)	Feb 1 Mar 21	20% (2x 10%)
Fieldwork Project	Apr 4 - Apr 11	20%
Midterm exam	Feb 29	25%
Final exam	T.B.A	25%
Class participation	Ongoing	10%

Short Writing Assignments

For the short writing assignments you will write an 'editorial'-type short essay on a topic that will be given to you. These are meant to be 'opinion pieces' based on the information covered in the lectures, films and assigned readings, as well as group discussions in class. No additional research in the library is required to write these. The objective of these assignments is to provide an opportunity for you to receive detailed feedback on your writing skills, NOT your opinions or ideas. Each assignment is to be submitted at the beginning of class on the specified due date.

Late assignments will have 1 mark per day (Sat and Sun. too) deducted from the grade/mark achieved on that assignment.

Guidelines:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 to 2 typed pages, but no more than 2 typed pages (approx. 800 words maximum) • Staple it if more than 1 page and do not put it in a cover or folder • 12 font Times New Roman, double spaced • 1 inch margins ('Normal' margins in Word 2007) • Put your name and student number at the top of the first page
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Research Project

For the research project you will be expected to conduct some anthropological fieldwork and write a report presenting the results of your fieldwork and your interpretation of the potential significance of your findings. The general research topic is 'graffiti', but there will be considerable flexibility in terms of what you could choose to focus your research on specifically. You will be given an information package detailing what specifically you are expected to do, both in terms of your fieldwork and your written report of it.

Please note: I have given you a 1 week period within which you can submit your project. The detail of the written feedback you will receive depends on when you submit it. Projects submitted in class on Apr 5th will receive detailed written feedback, whereas projects between Apr 6th and Apr 11th will receive less detailed feedback (only very basic comments).

Very Important: Projects will NOT be accepted after Apr 11th. In other words, you will receive '0' for the project assignment if you do not hand it in by the deadline on Apr 11th. The ONLY exception to this will be cases of illness etc., with supporting documentation from a doctor or other relevant authority. If you find yourself in this or similar unforeseen circumstances please contact the Academic Counselling Office (see <https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>) and follow their instructions. According to University guidelines, in such cases I deal directly with them and not the student.

Exams

The midterm exam will include material (readings, lectures, in-class discussions, film) covered up until Feb 15th. The final exam is non-cumulative and will only include material covered between Mar 7th and Apr 11th. Both exams will consist of short, definitional-type questions, multiple choice questions and true/false questions, drawn from the lectures, in-class discussions, assigned reading and films presented in class (in other words, everything covered in class and assigned to you).

Class Participation Mark

The mark you receive for class participation, in part, necessarily depends on your class attendance, and especially your participation in the in-class discussions. Attendance will be taken periodically during the discussion sessions, and especially at scheduled tutorials. If you are prevented from attending the discussion sessions for some very good reason such as illness, you **MUST** come and talk to me during my office hours and I will try to make arrangements for you to 'participate' in some other way. Failure to attend class, and especially the in-class discussion sessions will be directly reflected in your participation mark.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Date	Lecture Topic	Readings	Films and Discussion Topics
Jan 11	What is Cultural Anthropology?	Miller et al. (1)	Film: Off the Veranda
Jan 18	How Do We Study Culture?	Miller et al. (2) www.theanthropologistinthefield.com	Film: Ngat is Dead
Jan 25	Making a Living	Miller et al. (3)	Film: Birdsong & Coffee: A Wakeup Call
Feb 1	Fulfilling our Needs & Wants: Production, Consumption & Exchange Assignment 1	Miller et al. (4)	Discovering the inner forager in you
Feb 8	The Life Cycle: From Birth to Death	Miller et al. (5&6)	Cultural notions of a 'good' life and a 'good' death
Feb 15	Disease, Illness & Healing	Miller et al. (7) Scheper-Hughes	Mother's Love: Death Without Weeping
Feb 22	No Class - Reading Week		
Feb 29	Midterm		
Mar 7	Kinship & Domestic Life	Miller et al. (8)	Family trees and 'kin folk'
Mar 14	Social Groups & Social Stratification	Miller et al. (9) Boehlke	Tattoos and clubs
Mar 21	Political Systems Assignment 2	Miller et al. (10)	Film: Style Wars
Mar 28	Religion	Miller et al. (11) Gmelch	Magic in Sport and Performance Arts
Apr 4	Communication & Expressive Culture Research Project	Miller et al. (12 & 13)	Graffiti and Street Art
Apr 11	People & Ideas on the Move	Miller et al. (14) Condry	The Globalization of Popular Culture
Apr 14-30	Final Exam		

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Electronic Devices: The use of electronic devices (e.g. mobile phones, PDA's, digital recorders) in class and during exams must be approved by the course instructor, with no exceptions. **Do not: make and accept phone calls, text, surf the net, email, play games or anything else you can do on a mobile phone, iPod, laptop or other electronic device during class.** Laptops are permitted in class but should only be used to take notes on the lecture.

WebCT: There is a course WebCT page for this course. You will find there announcements, this course outline, writing assignments and other information as needed. Powerpoint presentations for lectures will also be posted. However, lecture notes will not be posted. Neither are they available for students who have missed a class.

Accessibility: Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Email: Do not rely on email correspondence as a means of communicating with me or the Teaching Assistant outside of class. Instead, please make good use of our office hours. So, while you can contact us by e-mail, if we cannot provide an immediate response, or if the matter is something we cannot address quickly in reply, we will direct you to meet with us during office hours.

Plagiarism: All class assignments are expected to be written by you, independently of your classmates or other individuals or services. Written assignments that are identical or overly similar to a fellow classmate's or any previously existing document (textual, on-line or otherwise) will be considered plagiarism. When writing your essays especially, keep in mind that any words or ideas you borrow or copy from another source (book, article, web-site, TV show, newspaper etc.), even if paraphrased and not copied word for word, must be referenced properly. Give due credit to the source of ideas and words when they are not your own. If you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please speak to either me or one of the Teaching Assistant. Scholastic offences such as plagiarism are taken very seriously. For further information on scholastic offences please refer to the following information:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>