



**Course Instructor:**

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**Antirequisites:** None; **Prerequisites:** Anthropology 1020 (formerly Anthropology 1020E) or Anthropology 1025F/G or Anthropology 1021A/B.

This is an in-person special edition version of *Debates in Sociocultural Anthropology* in consideration of our current circumstances. The course is an invitation to explore ongoing questions about why, and how, sociocultural anthropologists do what they do. Through weekly lectures, discussions, readings, and audio and visual media, we will investigate some of the big concepts that define the discipline while reflecting on our own developing identities as sociocultural anthropologists.

**Learning Outcomes:** Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

- critically analyze why sociocultural anthropologists do what they do
- critically analyze how sociocultural anthropologists do what they do
- critically analyze the representational practices sociocultural anthropologists use to shape ideas about others and ourselves
- investigate the world with an anthropologically informed sensibility
- recognize how sociocultural anthropology contributes to understandings about what it means to be human

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignment	Value	Due Date
Weekly in-class quizzes	20%	
Summary/Response Assignment 1	15%	October 1
Summary/Response Assignment 2	15%	October 15
Object-Identity Assignment	10%	October 29
Create a Culture Paper	20%	November 19
Create a Culture Proposal	20%	December 10



## COURSE MATERIALS:

All readings, media, and lecture presentations can be accessed through the course's OWL portal. Students are not required to purchase any readings or other materials for this course.

**This COURSE SCHEDULE will be revised as the course progresses. Readings and media may be updated to reflect current research and happenings. It may be adjusted to accommodate guest speakers or allow us to go where our curiosity takes us.**



## COURSE SCHEDULE: Version – August 20, 2021

### Lecture # / Date / Topic / Readings / Media

#### 1. SEPTEMBER 8

Topic: **Stories**  
Readings: Wesch, [The Power of Storytelling](#)  
Media: [Chimamanda Adichie – The Power of the Single Story](#) (18:34)  
[Thomas King – The Truth About Stories PART 1](#) (46:22)  
[Mike Wesch - TEDxNYED](#) (15:55)

#### 2. SEPTEMBER 15

Topic: **Forget Culture**  
Readings: Lavenda and Schultz, [Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology: Culture](#)  
Li, [The Spy Who Came in from the South](#)  
Media: [Darryl Li – The Relationship Between Transnational Jihadists and the U.S. Empire](#) (43:35)

#### 3. SEPTEMBER 22

Topic: **The Activist Imaginary**  
Readings: Angelotti and Povinelli, [Karrabing is not a clan. ... It is an aspiration](#)  
Englehart, [Media Activism in the Screening Room](#)  
Levine, [Documentary Film and HIV/AIDS](#)  
Media: [Patience and Pinkie: Mother to Child](#) Steps for the Future (44:10)  
[Povinelli Darnell Lecture Dec 2020](#) (1:13:00 - 1:21:00)  
[The Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland](#) Karrabing Film Collective (01:00 demo)

#### 4. SEPTEMBER 29

Topic: **Representation**  
Readings: Trask, [Natives and Anthropologists: The Colonial Struggle](#)  
Keesing, [Creating the Past: Custom and Identity in the Pacific](#)  
Media: [Reality Comes to Vanuatu](#) (excerpt)  
[Two Cars, One Night](#) (11:17)

### Summary/Response Assignment 1 - Due: October 1

#### 5. OCTOBER 6

Topic: **Cover Controversy**  
Readings: Bonilla and Thomas, [An Interview with the Editor of American Anthropologist about the March 2020 Cover Controversy](#)  
Thomas, [Statement about March 2020 Cover](#)  
Colwell, [Is It Ever OK to Publish Photographs of Human Remains?](#)  
Hughes, [The Reinvention of Humanity by Charles King review](#)  
Menand, [How Cultural Anthropologists Redefined Humanity](#)

Media: [How One Anthropologist Reshaped How Social Scientists Think About Race](#) (9:59)  
[Anthropology in/of Disaster: Yarima Bonilla and Laurence Ralph](#) (1:29:12)

6. OCTOBER 13

Topic: **Identity**  
Readings: Eriksen, [Understanding Cultural Change](#) (pages 132-135)  
Proctor, [Policing the Fluff](#) (pages 485-491, 500-507)  
Read, [From Otherkin to Transethnicity](#)  
Media: Dodd, *Opioid crisis: why aren't we moved to action*  
*Wendake: A Place Set Apart* (excerpt)

Summary/Response Assignment 2 - Due: October 15

7. OCTOBER 20

Topic: **Nostalgia and Solastalgia**  
Readings: Lofgren, [Order Chaos and Desperation: The Hyper-materiality of Everyday Life](#)  
Highmore, [Familiar Things](#) (pages 58-59)  
Stewart, [Nostalgia—A Polemic](#) (pages 227-228, 234-241)  
Mack, [Authentically Overwhelmed](#)  
Media: [Solastalgia and why we long for places we once knew](#) (12:05)

8. OCTOBER 27

Topic: **Explaining the World**  
Reading: Shorter, [Spirituality](#)  
Media: TallBear, [Science v. the Sacred, a Dead-end Settler Ontology - - And Then What?](#)  
(42:30)

Object-Identity Assignment - Due: October 29

9. NOVEMBER 10

Topic: **Posthuman Anthropology**  
Readings: Whitehead and Wesch, [Introduction: Human No More](#)  
Fischer, [Emergent Forms of Life: Anthropologies of Late or Postmodernities](#)  
(455-458)

10. NOVEMBER 17

Topic: **Mining Memory**  
Readings: Yon, [Connectivity](#)  
Yon, [Race-Making/Race-Mixing: St. Helena and the South Atlantic World](#)  
Media: *Mining Memory* (56:00)

Create a Culture Paper - Due: November 19

11. NOVEMBER 24

Topic: **Cultural Survival**  
Readings: Lavenda and Schultz, [Chapter 1: Anthropology](#) (6 - 12)  
Lavenda and Schultz, [Chapter 12: Theory](#) (196 - 201)  
Media: Davis, [Dreams from Endangered Cultures](#) (18:02)

12. DECEMBER 1

Topic: **Anthropology Meets World**  
Reading: Orner, [Dark Anthropology and Its Others](#)  
Media: Solnit, *Falling Together (On Being with Krista Tippett)*

Create a Culture Research Proposal - Due: December 10

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

### SUMMARY/RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT 1: STATUES DEBATE

**Due: October 1**



Everything you need to complete this assignment is in the **Summary/Response 1** folder on OWL.

Read **The Debate**. **The Debate** is an email exchange between anthropologists about the removal of Civil War Confederate Statues occurring in the United States.

Read the (short) articles the debaters reference. To understand the debaters' arguments, you must read the articles they reference – especially the New York Times article that includes the interview with

Richard Marksbury. There is also a must-read document called “Summary/Response Supplemental” which provides additional background information and a key to terms and acronyms.

There are two parts to this assignment. First, you are required to summarize the major themes of the debate. To do this you should explain what the participants argue are the fundamental issues and state how the debaters are positioned in relation to the issues discussed. Second, you must write a personal response to the debate. How has the debate changed or affected your own assumptions about the issues presented? What do you find compelling or problematic about the various writers' arguments? Are these issues important to you – if so, why? Do the social phenomena discussed in the debate influence what you think about issues of culture? What do you think about how the anthropologists represent the people affected by this issue? Do you agree or disagree with a particular writer? Tell us how you feel and what you think.

- Make it clear you have read and understood the arguments presented by the debate participants. You are responding to the writers' ideas about the issues raised in the debate.
- Write in the first person when you are expressing your opinions.
- A bibliography is not necessary. Only use sources from this Summary/Response 1 folder
- You can cite the debaters by their name and an article by author's name or publication. For example: Richard questions “were these council members unsympathetic?” “Litigation and outrage have not been in short supply” (New York Times).
- Avoid unnecessary description and quotations. Your TAs and I have read all the materials!
- Length: 500 words
- Formatting: double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, separate title page (name, student #, date, course, instructor's name, title of assignment), no graphics
- Submit an electronic copy to the Assignments feature on OWL

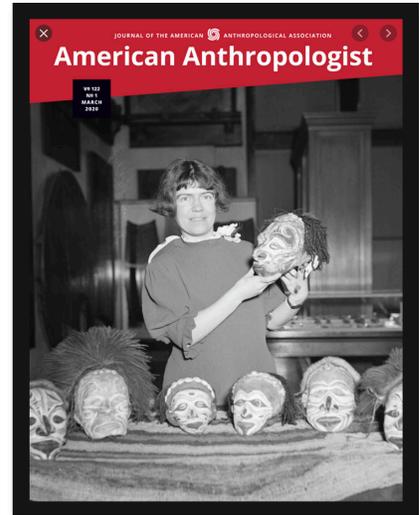
**Due Date: October 1; Value: 15%**

## SUMMARY/RESPONSE ASSIGNMENT 2: COVER CONTROVERSY

Due: October 15

For an overview of the issues and the positions of the various players in this controversy and debate, **make sure to attend Lecture 5, October 6th.**

The March 2020 issue of the journal *American Anthropologist*, which included a special section on the anthropology of global white supremacy, featured a controversial cover photograph of Margaret Mead which was eventually removed (Thomas). The editor, Deborah Thomas, was interviewed about her decision to remove the cover photograph (Bonilla and Thomas). In the interview Thomas made statements about anthropology itself reproducing white supremacy. The contributors to the email debate are responding to the removal of the cover photograph and the editor's comments (THE DEBATE). They reference the influence and legacy of anthropologist Frantz Boas. Mead was a student of Boas. The Menand and Hughes articles, and the NPR interview with Charles King, provide you with a brief introduction to Boas and Mead. The cover controversy and debate over the editor's statement take place when some are questioning the role of anthropology today. This question is addressed by activist anthropologists Yarimar Bonilla and Laurence Ralph (*Anthropology in/of Disaster*).



The Summary/Response 2 folder contains an image of the controversial cover, THE DEBATE, and links to the course materials from Lecture 5. There is also a document called “Summary/Response 2 Supplemental” which provides background information about the authors, email debaters, and interviewees.

There are two parts to this assignment. First, you are required to summarize the major themes of the debate surrounding the cover controversy. To do this you should explain the issues, and state how the participants in the debate are positioned in relation to the issues discussed. Second, you must write a personal response to the debate. How has the debate changed or affected your own assumptions about the issues presented? What do you find compelling or problematic about the various arguments? Are these issues important to you – if so, why? How do the underlying issues discussed influence what you think about anthropology? What do you think about how the various anthropologists represent the people affected by this issue? Tell us how you feel and what you think.

- Make it clear you have read and understood the issues. You are responding to the various authors', emailers', and interview participants' ideas about the issues raised in the debate.
- Write in the first person when you are expressing your opinions.
- A bibliography is not necessary. Only use sources from the Summary/Response 2 folder.
- You can cite the authors, emailers, and interviewees by their name.  
For example: Eric argues the outrage reflects our own ethnocentrism.  
I didn't want to “claim ignorance” (Thomas).
- Avoid unnecessary description and quotations. Your TAs and I have read, watched, and listened to all the materials!
- Formatting: double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, separate title page (name, student #, date, course, instructor's name, title of assignment), no graphics
- Submit an electronic copy to the Assignments feature on OWL
- Length: 500 words

**Due Date: October 15; Value: 15%**

## OBJECT - IDENTITY ASSIGNMENT

Due: October 29

This assignment asks you to think about your mimetic identity which you create through your relationship to things or objects. Photograph yourself with an object. It could be a gift from someone else, or from yourself. It could be something you made, artwork, or a craft. It could be an heirloom. It could need care or fixing. It could be a burden or an object that has died a “social death” and has been reborn in nostalgia. If the object’s meaning invokes solastalgia, tell us about how it conveys your relationship to that disappearing place. Working from the photograph think about the following:



How do you identify with it? How does it produce your identity through your relationship to it? How does your interaction with it represent a performance of self? What does it say about who you are or who you want to be? How does it situate you culturally? In keeping with the themes of the course discuss how it connects you to wider flows of technology, social networks, capital, information, material culture(s)? To assist you in interpreting your own meaning-making use at least three sources from the course materials. These sources cannot duplicate those previously referenced in prior assignments. There’s one other condition: the object cannot be electronic; it cannot use a battery; it cannot plug in; this means you cannot use your phone, tablet, iPad, digital watch, gaming devices, laptop, or even antiques like iPods. If you are uncertain about whether this condition applies to your object, ask me or your TAs. Discussion of the concepts and more details about this assignment will be provided in Lecture 7.

- Length: 500 words
- Formatting: double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, separate title page (name, student #, date, course, instructor’s name, title of assignment), no graphics
- Submit an electronic copy to the Assignments feature on OWL

**Due Date: October 29; Value: 10%**

## CREATE A CULTURE PAPER

**Due: November 19**



- For this assignment you will create your own culture.
- Your culture will experience dramatic social change due to a transformative event (like a pandemic).
- The first half of the essay should describe your culture before the transformative event.
- The second half should discuss how the transformative event altered the structure of your culture and affected the social categories you have established.

### **Suggestions for creating your culture:**

Think about the social categories of the people who make up your culture. Are social categories determined by identity, age, gender, wealth, status, kinship, ethnicity, or profession? Is there a social hierarchy which privileges some people and not others? How does your culture's social, political, economic, or belief system determine the basis for your culture. Is there a special cultural performance, ritual, or economic activity which defines your culture? How does the transformative event change the relationship between the social categories in your culture?

- Your culture must “make sense.” This means that if your culture has great cities and subsists by gathering and hunting, you must provide some mechanism that allows for that possibility.
- Write in the 3rd person. This is an ethnography of a culture/community/society, not an individual.
- The place for your culture: earth and earthlings.
- The time frame for your culture: contemporary (2021); you may draw from the near past and near future.

Detailed instructions and guidelines are provided for this assignment in **Lecture 9** and **Lecture 10**.

- Length: 1000 words
- formatting: double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins
- separate title page (title of paper, name, student #, date, course, instructor's name)
- no graphics, text only
- submit an electronic copy to the course's Assignments feature on OWL

**Due Date: November 19; Value: 20%.**

## CREATE A CULTURE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Due: December 10

The purpose of this assignment is for you to demonstrate how the issues, debates, and questions we have been discussing in the course affect the practice of sociocultural anthropology.

You will write a research proposal as if you are a sociocultural anthropologist who wants to conduct research amongst the people in the culture you have created. Your audience for this proposal is a scholarship review committee. You need to convince the committee of the value of your research so they will give you the money to fund your project.



Like all good academic researchers, you need to use the work of other experts in your field to justify your research proposal. Where do you find the work of other expert anthropologists? In the the course materials: readings, media, and lectures. Throughout the course you have read and listened to anthropologists' critiques about, and approaches to, conducting anthropological research. I suggest you reference at least three sources from the course materials. How you integrate the ideas of other scholars and researchers into your proposal is the best indication that you have thought through your project and that it deserves funding.

The proposal should be structured as follows:

**Research Question:** Your research question should be a clear concise statement indicating what you intend to investigate. See Lecture Week Eleven and Lecture Week Twelve for details and additional guidelines.

**Objective:** Your research objective should be a clear concise statement which answers the question: What do you hope to learn? See Lecture Week Eleven and Lecture Week Twelve for details and additional guidelines.

**Research Context:** This is the major section of this assignment. Based on what you have told us in your Create a Culture paper, how will issues we have encountered in this course affect, complicate, possibly prevent, or need careful consideration, for you to carry out your research? Use the course materials to explain possible challenges, and how you will cope with those challenges. Use the course materials to answer the question: "Why? See Lecture Week Eleven and Lecture Week Twelve for details and additional guidelines.

**Relevancy:** What are the anticipated outcomes or results of your research? In this section you are convincing the scholarship review committee that your research has value. You are answering the "So what? question. Does your research have value for the people in the culture? for anthropology? for the world? See Lecture Week Eleven and Lecture Week Twelve for details and additional guidelines.

Formatting the proposal:

- title your Research Project
- use the four subheadings to structure your proposal: Research Question; Objective; Research Context; Relevancy.
- cite your references by the author's last name only, the title of the media, or Lecture number
- use course materials only – no external references

Formatting the document:

- double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins, separate title page (name, student #, date, course, instructor's name, title of assignment), no graphics
- submit an electronic copy to the course's Assignments feature on OWL

Additional guidelines are provided for this assignment in **Lecture 9, 10, 11, and 12.**

**Length: 1000 words; Due Date: December 10; Value 20%**

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Please refer to the ANTHRO 2222G-650 Course Outline in the Syllabus folder on the course's OWL site for **Course Specific Conditions Required to Pass this Course; Course Specific Statements and Policies; Statement on Seeking Special Accommodations; Statement on Plagiarism; and Institutional Statements and Policies.**

