



SOAN 110

Introduction to Anthropology

Fall 2022

Course Details

Instructor: Colin McLaughlin-Alcock
Email: cmclaughlin@carleton.edu
Office: Leighton 229
Office Hours: After Class (T, TH 3-4pm)
or by appointment

Meeting Time: T, TH 1:15-3:00
Classroom: Leighton 236

Overview

Anthropology, as the study of human difference, asks what it means to be human. It explores the stunning variety of human life around the globe, looking at diverse forms of social organization and self-knowledge. While anthropology has its origins in the study of small-scale societies, anthropologists today study all aspects of human life. This includes the social organization of large cities, corporations, globalization, digital media, NGOs...as well as contemporary issues like social violence, space travel, climate change, and racism.

This course is designed to give students an introduction to the ideas, methods, and contemporary scope of anthropological research. If you are an anthropology major, it will provide you with the basic tools to continue with higher level course work and will prepare you to be conversant in anthropological ideas. By surveying some of the many issues that anthropology discusses, it will also help you determine what higher-level courses might be more interesting to you. If you are not an anthropology major, this course will still be useful to both your academic career and your non-academic life. We will discuss topics relevant to other majors, including medicine, economics, science, and technology, and will take an anthropological perspective on those issues, exploring how work in those disciplines becomes active in, and relevant to, the world. This course gives important perspective on the broader stakes of your learning, which will serve you well in your future careers. This course also will support you all as citizens, as we will engage in careful exploration of the world around us, and our place in it, learning to better understand how human society works.

Skills Gained

Anthropological Thinking: You will gain a foundation in anthropological methods, including participant observation, cultural comparison, thick description, and cultural relativism, and will learn to recognize how these methods shape anthropological research findings. Through this, you will learn to understand and evaluate ethnographic writing and will be prepared to approach specialized topics of anthropological study in higher level courses.

Understanding Difference and Inequality: The study of anthropology will give you tools for analyzing various dimensions of social difference and inequality. In particular, you will learn to recognize the social processes which produce and maintain inequality, and will learn to understand how dynamics of inequality shape wider social systems (including politics, economic processes, technology production, public health, etc.)

Situated Knowledge: Through attention to the historic connections between the development of anthropology and colonial violence, and discussion about contemporary efforts to remediate this history, you will learn to think critically about the relation between knowledge production, power, and social inequality.

A Note on the Reading

One goal of this course is to familiarize you with ethnographic thought. To that end, I have chosen readings from influential works of anthropology. For each class, you will be assigned between 1-2 chapters or articles of ethnographic work (or the equivalent). As these introduce you to new ideas and to new styles of ethnographic thinking, you may find some of these readings challenging (although they have been selected to be appropriate for new anthropologists, like you). Be prepared to read an assignment slowly, or more than once. If there is something that you still don't understand, please make a note of it, and I look forward to helping you work through any difficult points in class. You will find that, as the course moves forward and the ethnographic style becomes more familiar to you, you will get steadily more comfortable with the readings.

Students are responsible for obtaining *Back Stories: U.S. News Production and Palestinian Politics* by Amahl Bishara, and possibly an additional personalized reading which will be assigned in discussion with the student. An E-version of *Back Stories* is available through the library. All other readings will be available on the course website.

ASSIGNMENTS

Readings and Reading Guides: For each class session, students will have assigned readings to complete before class. These will be accompanied with short reading guides which must be completed and submitted online prior to the start of the relevant class session. Completed reading guides should also be brought to class for the purpose of class discussion. Reading guides are graded on the basis of participation, meaning, as long as you complete these, you will receive full credit for the assignment.

Content Reviews: Students will be given two take home concept reviews, one for each major section of the course. These reviews consist of 3-4 short questions that ask students to apply concepts developed in class. The expectation is that the student will write a paragraph answer to each question and demonstrate a clear understanding of the concept through an example from our class reading or discussion.

Observation Assignments: As participant observation is a key mode of anthropological inquiry, students will be assigned three structured observations over the course of the class: an observation of the use of public space, an observation of the negotiation of socio-cultural difference in food-travel television, and an interview exploring someone's experience of a major historical event. Each of these observations explores a concept that we will develop in class. Observations should be documented with a short written response.

Group Ethnography: For this assignment, you will work in groups to conduct a small ethnographic research project examining a social space on or near campus. Each group member will have discrete research and writing tasks to contribute to the group, and the group will work together to synthesize this into a short research paper. You will be graded both on your personal contribution and on the group's collective output. Class time will be made available for group work.

Final Paper: Towards the end of the class, students will work with me to select individualized readings, on a topic of their choosing, reflecting their personal, professional, or academic interests (typically a book or an equivalent selection of articles). Students are responsible for writing a short "book report" type paper (2-4 pages) that summarizes their reading and explains how the anthropological perspective of this reading gives new insight into the topic addressed. Strong papers will have a conclusion that explores how this perspective can be applied to the student's life or academic career.

Potential topics include, but are not limited to: climate change, medicine, business, corporations, migration, design, nuclear physics, art, music, tourism, war and conflict, development, policy, digital media, urban planning, love, youth, political uprisings, homelessness, the entertainment industry, fashion, UFOs, labor, education, gardening, globalization, human rights, humor... students are encouraged to propose additional topics.

Grade Breakdown:

Attendance and Participation:	10%
Reading Guides:	10%
Content Reviews:	15%
Observation Assignments:	15%
Group Ethnography:	30% (15% personal contribution, 15% group product)
Final Paper:	20%

I. Foundations

The History and Methods of Anthropology

Session 1: Welcome and Introduction.

Session 2: Introductory Concepts

Read: Why Anthropology Matters (EASA publication)

Read: Mitchell, Timothy. 1988. "Egypt at the Exhibition." From *Colonizing Egypt*. Pp1-33.

Session 3: Participant Observation

Read: Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1922. Selection from *Argonauts of the Pacific*.

Read: Latour, Bruno. 1979. Selection from *Laboratory Life*.

Session 4: More on Ethnographic Research

Read: Seta Low. 2000. Selection from "On the Plaza."

Analyze: You will be assigned one of the following texts. Skim the introduction and carefully read the methods section. Identify what the researcher is trying to find out and how their research design helps them answer their research questions.

Group 1: Ghannam, Farah. *Live and Die Like a Man: Gender Dynamics in Urban Egypt*. (2013)

Group 2: Murphy, Keith. *Swedish Design: An Ethnography* (2015).

Group 3: Hamdy, Sherine. *Our Bodies Belong To God: Organ Transplants, Islam, and the Struggle For Human Dignity*. (2012)

Group 4: Shange, Savannah. *Progressive Dystopia: Abolition, Antiracism, and Schooling in San Francisco*. (2019)

Group 5: Zhan, Mei. *Other-Worldly. Making Chinese Medicine Through Transnational Frames*. (2009)

Session 5: Cultural Comparison

Read: Mead, Margaret. 1935. Selection from *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*.

Read: Jarrin, Avaro. 2016. "Untranslatable Subjects: Transvesti Access to Public Health Care in Brazil" *Transgender Studies Quarterly*. 3(3-4). pp357-375.

Session 6: Ethnographic Description and Cultural Relativism:

Read: Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description." in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. pp3-36.

Read: Walley, Christine. 1997. "Searching for 'Voices': Feminism, Anthropology, and the Global Debate over Female Genital Operations." *Cultural Anthropology*. 12(3). pp405-438.

Session 7: Ethnic Groups and Social Boundaries I

Read: Barth, Fredrik. 1969. "Introduction." From *Ethnic Groups And Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. pp9-38.

Session 8: Ethnic Groups and Social Boundaries II

Read: Clancy Smith, Julia: 2010. Selection from *Mediterraneans*.

Session 9: Reckoning with Anthropology's Colonial Roots

Read: Hundorf, SM. 2000. "Nanook and his Contemporaries" *Critical Inquiry* 27(1) pp122-148.

Read: Cache Collective: 2008. "Cache: Provisions and Productions in Contemporary Igloodik Video." in *Global Indigenous Media*. Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart, eds. pp74-88.

Take Home Review no. 1

II. Topics in Ethnographic Research

Session 10: Anthropology and Race

Read: Garcia, Justin D. "Race and Ethnicity" from Perspectives, an Open Invitation to Cultural Anthropology.

Watch: The Difference Between Us: Race The Power of an Illusion.

https://fod-infobase-com.ezproxy.carleton.edu/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=49734

Session 11: Race and Comparison

Read: Simmons, Kimberly. 2008. "Navigating the Racial Terrain: Blackness and Mixedness in the United States and the Dominican Republic." *Transforming Anthropology* 16(2). pp95-111

Read: Shankar, Shalini. 2008. "Speaking Like a Model Minority." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 18(2). pp268-289.

Session 12: Anthropology and Gender:

Read: Newcomb, Rachel. 2006. "Gendering the City, Gendering the Nation: Contesting Urban Space in Fes, Morocco." *City and Society* 18(2). pp288-311

Session 13: Gender Cont.

Read: Morgan, Lynn. 1997. "Imagining the Unborn in the Ecuadoran Andes." *Feminist Studies*. 23(2). 323-350.

Session 14: Globalization and Neoliberalism.

Read: Harvey, David. 2005. "Freedom's Just Another Word" from *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. pp6-38.

Read: Elyachar, Julia. 2010 "Phatic Labor, Infrastructure, and the Question of Empowerment in Cairo." *American Ethnologist*. 37(3) pp4512-464.

Session 15: Economic Worlds and Economic Anthropology.

Read: McLaughlin-Alcock, Colin. 2020. "Artistic Topologies: New Social Formations and Political Change in an Emerging Ammani Art World." *City and Society*. 32(3) pp694-715.

Read: Lyon, Sarah. "Economics." from Perspectives, an Open Invitation to Cultural Anthropology.

Session 16: Anthropology of Religion

Read: Hamdy, Sherine. 2012. "Transplanting God's Property: On the Ethics of Scale." From *Our Bodies Belong to God: Organ Transplants, Islam, and the Struggle for Human Dignity in Egypt*.

Read: Bowen, John. 2010. "Negotiating Accross Realms of Justification." From. *Can Islam Be French? Pluralism and Pragmatism in a Secularist State*.

Session 17: The Question of Objectivity

Read: Bishara, Amahl. 2012. "Balanced Objectivity and Accumulated Authorship" and "Arming State Speech, Constraining Journalists Work" From. *Back Stories: U.S. News Production and Palestinian Politics*

Take Home Review no. 2

Session 18: Advanced Discussion and Debate: Saba Mahmood's Politics of Piety I.

Read: Shielke, Samuli . 2009. "Being Good in Ramadan: Ambivalence, Fragmentation, and the Moral Self in the Lives of Young Egyptians." *JRAI* v15. pS24-S40.

Session 19: Advanced Discussion and Debate: Saba Mahmood's Politics of Piety II.

Read: Mahmood, Saba. 2004. "The Subject of Freedom." From *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*.

Session 20: Final Class: Flex day: No Assigned Readings.

Policies

Absences: Attendance and participation is a key part of this class. However, I recognize that things come up where you may not be able to attend. If you are ill, please stay home (you may call in to class if you wish). For up to two absences, no explanation is required, although you are still responsible for the class material and any work that was due on that day. Additional absences will require consultation with me to be excused and may result in makeup work or points taken off the grade. Your best bet is to contact me as early as possible if you will be absent for more than 2 classes.

Lateness: To request an extension, please use this link: <https://tinyurl.com/extreq>. It is my general policy to grant short extensions when they are requested. However, please recognize that the deadlines in this class are important, both for keeping you from falling behind, and for making sure that you are prepared to participate in class. (Classwork often builds off assignments). If you are behind on multiple assignments or request an extension of more than 2 days, you must communicate with me. We will agree on an appropriate new deadline and, at times, I may ask you for a more detailed plan explaining how you expect to get caught up. Students who are struggling to keep up with the pace of the class are encouraged to request a meeting with me to discuss appropriate supports which would enable them to succeed in the class (including potentially extensions/waived deadlines). Per school policy, all assignments except for the final assignment must be submitted by 5pm on the last day of classes, and I do not have the leeway to grant an extension on this.

Maintaining An Inclusive Classroom: I am committed to maintaining an open, inclusive, and welcoming classroom. Especially as we will discuss various issues of inequality and social difference, including issues of race, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality, it is important to be able to discuss these issues in a manner that is respectful of everyone. Threatening or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.

Academic Honesty: I am required to report plagiarism and other forms of cheating to the school. This can result in discipline, including potentially a zero for the class and other sanctions from the school. Please do your own work.

Regrades: If you believe that your grade on a particular assignment or in the course was in error, you may contact me with a letter explaining why you believe that the grade should be changed. You should be prepared to meet with me to discuss your request further. All regrade requests must be made before the end of the term, and within ten days of the grade being assigned.

Academic Accommodations: For students who need accommodation, I am happy to work with you to make sure that you have the support that you need. In addition to talking with me, please communicate with Disability Services to formalize accommodation requests. If you have, or think you may have, a disability please contact OAR@carleton.edu or call Sam Thayer ('10), Director of the Office of Accessibility Resources (x4464), to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

Campus Resources: College can be difficult personally, socially and intellectually, and it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Many students struggle with depression or other personal issues at some point in their college careers. It is important to seek help if you need it.

Academic Support Center: 507-222-5560

Student Counseling Services: 507-222-4080

Emergency counseling (on call) : 855-705-2479

CAASHA (sexual harassment/assault): <https://www.carleton.edu/student/orgs/caasha/>