

Cultural Anthropology

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Office Hours: Wed 2-4pm, and by appointment.

Course Description:

This course serves as an introduction to cultural anthropology, a multi-faceted approach to the study of culture which shapes and is shaped by linguistic and physical anthropology, as well as archaeology. We open the course by focusing on the place of cultural anthropology among these other overlapping fields of study. Next, discussion focuses on ways of conceptualizing culture which continue to influence its contemporary theorization, including perspectives which maintain that culture is best viewed as “product and process” (Giddens 1984, Malinowski 1944), what Geertz (1973) terms dynamic “webs of signification.”

After considering the post-modern challenge to representation and its consequences, we examine methods and approaches to studying cultural practices and their relation to forms of social organization. This discussion leads to an examination of language as medium and outcome of social interaction, as well as medium for metalinguistic and personal reflection. Armed with this conceptual base, we tackle core issues in the study of cultural anthropology, including cultural transmission, adaptation, kinship, economics, spirituality, magic, gender, and power (see tentative schedule below).

In order to illustrate how one cultural anthropologist addresses many of these topics, we will read an ethnography of hip hop youth cultures in Los Angeles, California. This work investigates the symbolic economy of hip hop social formations competing for resources in a community united by shared economic goals. By examining this, text we explore processes of cultural transmission and contestation, gendered performances and collective identification, as well as the politics of culture and communication, methods for studying cultural expression, and more.

Texts: (1) Haviland et al (2009) *Cultural Anthropology: The Human Challenge* (THC)
(2) Morgan (2009) *The Real Hip-hop: Battling for Knowledge, Power, and Respect in the LA Underground*

I have put some books on reserve that you will find useful to thumb through during the semester (the final essay will require you to draw on one or more of the reserved texts). These books include:

Taussig (1983) *Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*
Mendoza-Denton (2008) *Homegirls*
Fetterman (2009) *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*

Homework:

There will be a total of four reaction papers and two 5-7 page essays. The reaction papers, 1-2 pages, will require you to take a position on a topic from lecture or assigned readings. You will be evaluated on your ability to concisely synthesize material from class and readings.

The two essays invite you to engage in original cultural anthropological research on topics intimately familiar to you, of your choosing. These essays will take concepts from class and explore how they play out in our daily lives (for example, institutions, verbal art, power and politics, identity and difference, etc.). They should be **typed, stapled** (when more than one page), and handed in the day they are due in class. I will not accept emailed submissions. If you know you will not be in class the day an assignment is due, please contact me ahead of time. Late papers will be accepted only in cases of emergency (if such a situation arises, please contact me).

Final Essay:

There will be no final exam. Instead, there will be a final essay (10-12 pages), similar in aims and format to the other two essays written earlier in the semester. In this essay, you will explore how Morgan addresses one of several core concepts from lecture, such as gender, power, or linguistic practice.

Grading:

4 Reaction Papers @ 5---- 20 %
2 Essays @ 20----- 40
Final Essay----- 40

TOTAL-----100 %

Grade Scale: 98-100: A+, 94-97: A, 91-93: A-, 88-90: B+, 84-87: B, 81-83: B-, 78-80: C+, 74-77: C, 71-73: C-, 68-70: D+, 64-67: D, 61-63: D-, < or = 60: F.

Tentative Schedule:

	Topics	Readings (for class days)	Assignments
Week 1: 8/27	Overview / Syllabus	(syllabus)	
8/29	(cultural) anthropology	THC Ch 1	
8/31	The impact of the concept of culture on the concept of man	Geertz (1973)	
Week 2:			

9/3	No class: <i>Labor day</i>		
9/5	Views of culture	THC Ch 2, Duranti (1997)	
9/7	“thick description” & hip hop	Geertz (1977), Morgan (2009)	Reaction Paper 1 handed out
Week 3: 9/10	Ethnographic methods	Duranti (2007)	
9/12	Ethnographic methods (cont)	THC Ch 3	
9/14	Currents of cultural fieldwork / Ex.: “The hippest corner in L.A.”	Faubion (2007), Morgan (2009)	
Week 4: 9/17	The anthropology of performance	Turner & Schechner (1988)	Reaction 1 due / Ethnography proposal handed out
9/19	Performing ethnography	Turner & Schechner (1988)	
9/21	Verbal art as performance; Ex: “Enter the KAOS”	Bauman (2001); Morgan (2009) Ch 6	
Week 5: 9/24	Postmodern ethnography	Tyler (1986)	
9/26	Modernity and post-modernity in anthropology	Rabinow (1986)	
9/28	A crisis of representation in the human sciences	Marcus & Fischer (1999)	Reaction 2 handed out /
Week 6: 10/1	Intro to language and ling diversity	THC Ch 5	
10/3	Scope of linguistic anthropology	Duranti (1997)	
10/5	Introduction: Language defined	Sapir (2010)	Ethnography proposal due
Week 7: 10/8	Language, diversity, and cultural practice	Duranti (1997): Ch 3	Reaction 2 due/ Language, identity, and difference handed out
10/10	Welcome to the Underground: Building hip hop culture and language	Morgan (2009)	
10/12	Youth and cultural practice	Bucholtz (2002)	
Week 8: 10/15	Enculturation / cultural transmission; “Thursday night at Project Blowed”	Chaudhary (2004) Morgan (2009)	
10/17	The role of memory in the transmission of culture	Rowlands (1993)	
10/19	Acculturation and adaption	Barry & Sand (1997)	Reaction 3 handed out
Week 9: 10/22	Adaptation	THC Ch 4	
10/24	Example 1: The Sebei polity	Goldschmidt & Goldschmidt (1976)	
10/26	Example 2: Strategic regionalization in marketing campaigns	McWilliam (2009)	Lang, identity, and difference due
Week 10: 10/29	A first view of kinship	THC Chs 9 & 10	Reaction 3 due
10/31	Clan, kin, and age-set	Goldschmidt &	

		Goldschmit (1976)	
11/2	Lévi-Strauss: <i>Maison and Société à Maisons</i>	Joyce & Gillespie (2000)	Reaction 4 handed out
Week 11: 11/5	Subsistence	THC Ch 7	
11/7	Making a living	Schultz-Lavenda (2001)	
11/9	Environmentalisms	Herzfeld (2001)	Reaction 4 due
Week 12: 11/12	Economics	THC Ch 8	Final Essay handed out
11/14	Anthropology and economics	Knight (1941)	
11/16	Distribution of the system: Generosity, honour, and money	Mauss (1967)	
Week 13: 11/19	Spirituality, Religion, Magic	THC Ch 13	
11/21	Magic (<i>abbreviated</i>) 387-422	Evans-Pritchard (1937)	
11/23	No class: <i>Thanksgiving</i>		
Week 14: 11/26	Gender	THC Ch 6	
11/28	Language, gender, and power: An anthropological view	Gal (2001)	
11/30	(Ph)eminists of the new school	Morgan (2009)	
Week 15: 12/3	Politics and power	THC Ch 12	
12/5	Politics, discourse, and drama	Morgan (2009)	
12/7	Agency in language	Duranti (2004)	Final Essay due

Other Things to Note:

If you have a documented disability please set up a time with me to discuss your needs; you must also register with Disability Services in the Student Center if you haven't already.

The Honor Code applies in this class. You are encouraged to discuss the homework assignments and final paper with classmates, but you must write them up on your own.

One Final Note:

If you carry a cell phone, please turn it off or set it to silent before class begins.