

ANTH 202

Cultural Anthropology

Instructor: Manouchehr Shiva, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to cultural understanding of contemporary human societies. We discuss major theoretical and conceptual principles and perspectives of present-day cultural anthropologists and compare life-ways of various non-Western and Western communities.

The goal of this course is to introduce what cultural anthropology is all about and how it fits into the social sciences and humanities-- what is unique about cultural anthropology, and what it shares with other fields. Our focus will be answering the question, what is culture and how can it be addressed and studied?

We also discuss contemporary processes of globalization and socio-cultural change. We compare the effects of these processes on lives of ordinary people in local communities in various societies and regions of the world, and different politico-cultural reactions to global processes.

Our focus will be on understanding local communities and larger societies in relation to their cultural and historical contexts.

Throughout the course we emphasize understanding the cultural Other(s), in relation to reflecting on the cultural Self (Selves).

This is an inter-active or a seminar-like class. Class participation, questioning, and critical thinking are highly encouraged.

You are encouraged to take an active part in your learning process. You are asked to come to the class prepared, work on research projects, share and actively participate in the class's learning process, and critically reflect on what they hear, read or see.

Texts:

1 - Cultural Anthropology: A Problem-Based Approach

Richard H. Robbins Thomson Advantage Books

<http://anthropology.wadsworth.com/robbins4e>

2) A series of short articles and chapters are also provided to complement the assigned books and the audio-visual materials.

Audio-visual material: A major part of the information presented in the class is audio-visual in nature. Because of the comparative nature of anthropological method, we rely on films on other peoples--and also on the American culture/communities—to discuss various cultural anthropological concepts and ways of thinking.

Class Website: There is a complementary class website for communication between the instructor and the students, as well as among the students—particularly those who are working on their research and study projects together.

The text book is also accompanied by a website (above).

Grading -- Total of 100 points.

- **Class Attendance and Participation: 10 points.**
- **Weekly Feedbacks: 20 points**
- **Two Take-Home Exams: Total of 40 points.**

- **Final Project: 30 points.**

Students prepare the draft of their take-home exam in the class. Written description for each exam and its deadline is given in the class.

The focus of the final paper or project is the study of a social, cultural or political phenomenon or process, preferably from one's own culture, in its historical and cultural context.

The students choose the topic of their final paper by the end of the second week of the quarter. Your final projects has to do with a subject or topic of your own research interest, it could be related to the reading material from your books or class discussions and your research.

It is possible to have your take-home exams and your final project in small study and research groups, but it should be shown that all team members were actively participating in every and all parts of the exams and the project.

Class Content – Weekly

Week 1

Anthropology, Culture, and Meaning

Robbins – Chapter 1

Understanding the Other (and the Self)

Culture and Cultural Anthropological Perspective; Anthropological Theory; Fieldwork; Research Methods; Comparative Approach; Gender and Fieldwork; Cultural Relativism and Ethnocentrism; Self and Other; Holism and Contradiction; Culture Change and Globalization; Culture and Meaning

Week 2

The Meaning of Progress

Robbins – Chapter 2

How to Explain the Changes in the last 10,000 years or so.

Week 3

The Construction of the Nation-State and Globalization

Robbins – Chapter 3

How to Explain the Emergence of the Modern Nation-State

Globalization, Colonialism and Modernity; Culture or Cultures of Capitalism; Multiple Intertwined Modernities; Postmodern Conditions; Globalization, Human Rights and Human Cultures; Contemporary Social Movements; Gender and Globalization; Globalization and Construction of Modern Nations and Ethnic groups; Cultural Identity and Gender; Intercultural Encounters and Tensions;

Week 4

The Social and Cultural Construction of Reality

Robbins – Chapter 4

Belief Systems, Knowledge, Discourse and Language

Symbolic Systems and Meanings; Culture and Symbols; Religion and Worldview; Discourse and Practice; The Symbolic Meaning of Space; Power and Symbols; Symbolism of Sports; Gender Symbolism;

Language, Culture, and the Individual

Making Sense of the Human Condition; Culture and Language; Linguistic Relativity; Worldview; Intercultural Communication and Miscommunication; Socialization and Enculturation; Acculturation; Multi-Culturalism;

Week 5 –

Patterns of Family Relations

Robbins – Chapter 5

Dynamics of Family Life in a Comparative Perspective

Family, Gender and Kinship

Socio-Cultural Construction of Sex, Sexuality, Love, and Marriage; Family, and Kinship; Gender and Kinship; Descent and Residence; Violence and Sexuality;

Week 6 –

The Cultural Construction of Identity; Culture and Economy

Robbins – Chapter 6

Communicating Self and Personhood and Culture.

The Dimensions of Social Organization

Gender, Generation/Age; Stratification, Class, and State; Kinship and Social Organization; Individual and Social Organization; Communal Identity, Ethnicity, Nationalism and the State, Communal Identity, Power and Violence,

Culture and Economy

Making a Living: Human Imagination and the Material World; Subsistence Strategies; Production, Distribution, and Consumption; The Dialectic Relation between the Meaningful and the Material

Week 7

The Cultural Construction of Social Hierarchy

Robbins – Chapter 7

Social, Political, Economic and Cultural In-equalities

Power and Politics

Concepts in Political Anthropology; The State; Power and Culture; Power and Class; Power and Ideology; Order and Rebellion;

Week 8

The Cultural Construction of Violent Conflict

Robbins – Chapter 8

Violence, Non-Violence and Culture

Week 9 –

Ritual, Culture and Society

Ritual; Ritual and Worldview; Ritual and Gender; Play and Creativity; Praxis and Play; Ritual and Power; Ritual, History and Social Change;

Week 10 –

Art and Culture,

Culture, Art, and Artistic Creativity; Art and Identity; Art and Culture; Art and Intercultural Communication.

Week 11 – Review and Presentation of Projects