

Anthropology of American Life Online Class Syllabus

Anthropology/American Studies 180 Spring 2009

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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to a cultural understanding of contemporary American society. We discuss major theoretical and conceptual principles and perspectives of present-day cultural anthropology and cultural studies, and the way they could be applied to study the life-ways of various American communities. We explore how the perspectives and methods offered by anthropology, so useful for understanding others, can assist us understand the United States.

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

You will take an active part in your learning process. You are asked to participate in the class discussions prepared, work on research projects, share and actively participate in the class's learning process, and critically

Readings

I – Distant Mirrors: America As A Foreign Culture

Philip R. DeVita/James D. Armstrong (eds.)

Wadsworth/Thomson Learning

From the book advertisement:

“To understand the full impact of ethnography, to experience cultural relativity, and to gain a foundation to build informed comparisons, students need a firm grasp of their own culture. This third edition reader consists of 19 essays written by

anthropologists and other scholars using an ethnographic perspective. The essays enable students to understand themselves better by focusing on their own culture and seeing it from a new perspective. This collection gives anthropology a comparative perspective that provides a reflective lens, a mirror, for understanding ourselves and the world in which we live.”

2) Reflecting on America: Anthropological Views of U.S. Culture

Boulanger, Clare L. Boulanger (ed.)

Pearson

From the book advertisement:

“The anthology is primarily composed of articles written by American anthropologists on American mainstream culture, and addresses traditional ethnographic categories covered by anthropologists—myth and ritual, economy and power, language and ideology. Overall, it examines how “U.S. culture” emerges from and shapes the cultures of component diverse populations.”

3) A series of short articles and chapters are also provided to complement the assigned test books.

Grading -- Total of 1000 points

Class Discussion Participation: best 10 of 11 -- 15 points each 15% of total grade.

Weekly Feedbacks: best 10 of 11 weekly feedbacks -- 15 points each 15% of total grade

Mid-Term Exam: 200 points – 20% of total grade.

Final Exam: 200 points -- 20% of total grade.

Final Project: 300 points -- 30% to total grade.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND MEANS OF ASSESSMENT

Class Participation and Feedbacks include:

1. Post a detailed, comprehensive and well cited answers to discussion questions on the discussion board for each week, and at least three (3) additional well-thought messages (or feedbacks) in reply to other students' answers or replies.
2. Clearly contribute information to further understanding of the concepts involved in the readings.
3. Derive information only from the course texts or other assigned or academic sources and properly cite source (author and title) and page, table or figure numbers if available.
4. Exhibit a correct and comprehensive understanding of the issues (given that later messages can revise earlier ones).
5. Be courteous and "scientific" in attitude and communication.

The purpose of discussions and feedbacks is to develop a deeper and more complete understanding of specific key concepts and problems in anthropology. By fully participating in the week's discussion, you will be prepared for the essay questions in the quizzes and exams.

Research Project

The focus of the research project is an outline of a study of an American social or cultural phenomenon, event, institution or process from an anthropological perspective.

Students choose the focus of their research project by the second week of the quarter.

Project topics have to do with subjects and information from our readings, class discussions, and your own research and interest.

Length of Research Report– Four or five pages, excluding bibliography. The report should show the progress of the research process during the quarter and your thinking behind it.

UNITS/WEEKLY CONTENT

Unit 1 Culture

Understanding the Other and the Self

Culture and Cultural Anthropological Perspectives

Cultural Studies

Anthropological Fieldwork and Research Methods

Comparative Approach

Cultural Relativism and Ethnocentrism

Holistic Approach

Culture and Power

Culture and History

Culture and Globalization,

Culture and Gender

Culture and Generation

Culture and Class,

Culture and Ethnicity/Nationalism

Readings:

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 1

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 2

Reflecting on America Introduction and Chapter 1

Reflecting on America - Chapter 17

Reflecting on America - Chapter 18

Unit 2 Ritual, Power, History and Myth

Culture and Ritual

Ritual and Ritualization

Ritual and Construction of Class, Gender, Generation, Ethnic and National Identities

Ritual and Power

History, Myth, and Ritual

Readings:

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 3

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 4

Reflecting on America - Chapter 2

Reflecting on America - Chapter 3

Unit 3 Religion

Religion in America

Anthropological Perspective in Studying Religious Beliefs and Practices

Public and Private Dimensions of Religion in American Lives

Religions and American Politics

Readings:

Reflecting on America - Chapter 4

Reflecting on America - Chapter 5

Reflecting on America - Chapter 6

Unit 4 Political Economy and Socio-Economic Stratification

Political Economy and Class in the U.S.

Production, Distribution, and Consumption Patterns in the U.S.

Culture and Class

The Meaningful and the Material

Constructions of Class in America

Readings:

Reflecting on America - Chapter 7

Reflecting on America - Chapter 8

Reflecting on America - Chapter 9

Reflecting on America - Chapter 12

Unit 5 Socialization / Enculturation

Mid-term exam is scheduled during the fifth week of the class

Enculturation and Socialization

Aspects of American Childhood and Adolescence

Anthropology of American Education

Anthropology of American Higher Education

Socialization/Enculturation and Sub-cultures

Media and Enculturation/Socialization

Readings:

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 6

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 7

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 15

Reflecting on America - Chapter 14

Unit 6 Language, Society, Worldview and Culture

Language, Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in America

Language and Power

Language and Worldview

Language, Culture and Subcultures

American Media and Language

American English and Globalization

Readings:

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 8

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 9

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 10

Reflecting on America - Chapter 15

Reflecting on America - Chapter 16

Unit 7 Gender, Generation and Family in the U.S.

Gender in America

Youth and American Culture

Representations of the Youth in the Media

The Elderly in America

American Family Patterns

Readings:

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 11

Reflecting on America - Chapter 10

Unit 8 Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism

Race and Racism in America

Constructing Ethnicity in America

Nation and Nationalism in America

Trans-Nationalism in America

Immigration and Making of America

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 12

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 13

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 14

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 16

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 17

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 19

Reflecting on America - Chapter 13

Unit 9 Power, Politics and The State

Culture of American Politics

Power and Politics

Concepts in Political Anthropology

The State

Class, Power and the State

Power and Ideology

Political Rituals

Readings:

Distant Mirrors – Chapter 18

Reflecting on America - Chapter 11

Unit 10 Case Studies

Based on the interest of the instructor and the students a few topics are chosen to study and apply cultural anthropological and cultural studies approaches.

Examples:

American Media and American Life

Sports in America

Violence in America

American Politics Abroad

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Readings:

Internet Library Sources

EQUIPMENT AND SKILLS REQUIREMENTS

Taking an online course requires basic computer literacy and a little more. You must be proficient in navigating the World Wide Web (the Web) and may have to be able to download and install plug-ins. An online course often requires accessing the Web on a regular basis. You need a reliable ISP that seldom responds to your call with a busy signal. You need to be able to write English on a word processor, save documents and organize the resulting files, copy documents into your clipboard and paste them into another application, and attach documents to e-mail and retrieve them.

COURSE ASSUMPTIONS

All humans learn and all humans teach. Humans learn and teach in communities, and communities embody more knowledge than any one individual possesses. These characteristics have been fundamental first to human biological evolution, and then to the origin and evolution of cultures. Formal education takes place in a special community -- the learning community. The more cohesive the learning community and the more focused it is on shared goals, the more intense is the learning experience.

In the best of learning communities, both "instructor" and "students" are learners. The instructor takes responsibility for the overall goals and direction of the course, the materials, pacing, lessons, and assessment. But students must take responsibility for their own learning. They must bring questions to the table, and act critically upon the materials of the course. Learning cannot be passive; it's hard work. Certainly it's useful and rewarding, but like long distance running, it hurts a lot while you are doing it and feels great when you stop.

Online courses are in many ways more focused and intensive learning communities than those encountered in the classroom ("on the ground"). You will be reading a lot and writing a lot, and communicating intensively with your fellow class members. You will need to put in about 15 hours of study a week, and you should log into the classroom at least five times a week to receive the week's schedule, read your e-mail, post commentaries and other assignments, and read and discuss the work of others. It's assumed that we are all there to learn some anthropology, to develop and exercise critical thinking skills, and to stretch ourselves creatively in the exploration of ideas. But above all we are all there to discover ways the tools of anthropology can illuminate our daily lives and current problems of the human condition in the U.S.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

As your instructor, I have the responsibility to:

- provide a comprehensive syllabus and course weekly assignments calendar which displays all due dates for readings, assignments, and exams
- grade or otherwise respond to all submitted materials within a timely manner.
- monitor your group participation in the online classroom weekly and occasionally comment on it

- inform you of your current grade and relative class standing upon request
- respond to any e-mail and answer all appropriate questions in a timely manner
- behave professionally, respecting you as an individual of intelligence and sensitivity

As students, you have the responsibility to:

- behave to all others in the class in a professional manner, being especially careful in e-mail and other electronic communications to avoid personal attacks, harsh criticisms, and objectionable language
- keep up with the course work and submit your work in on time
- support your class members to establish a genuine learning community

Classroom Courtesy and Scientific Approach

Anthropology is a social science course. Physical anthropology is both a social and natural science course. What our studies will present is the current scientific understanding of biological evolution--especially human evolution--cultural evolution, the origin of language, human cognition, cultural organization, and the vast diversity of human cultures and values. The course may challenge many of your deepest beliefs about human nature and the origin and meaning of life. While the broad outlines of human biological and cultural evolution are agreed upon in the field, as in any science there are numerous outstanding questions yet to be resolved--that is the very nature and essence of science. To develop a learning community, we all need to be courteous and respectful of each other's work. Abrasive, abusive, sarcastic or intimidating messages directed to anyone in the class, including the instructor, will not be tolerated.

General Education Ratings

Comparative Religion has the following General Education Ratings:

REASONING

Critical Thinking 2,

Creativity 1, Problem solving 0 Quantitative/Logical 0 Research/Information 2
Literacy 2 Reading 2 Writing 2

What do these ratings mean?

0 = Course does not include instruction and assessment of this area.

1 = Course includes instruction and practice of the gen-ed area, and performance/knowledge of this area is assessed.

2 = Course includes instruction and practice in two or more of the outcomes of this gen-ed area, performance/knowledge is assessed, and 20% or more of the course focuses on it.

3 = Course includes instruction and practice in at least half of the outcomes of this gen-ed area, performance/knowledge is assessed, and 1/3 or more of the course focuses on it.

Please consult BCC's Course Catalog for more information on General Education Ratings.

ONLINE PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCE DIVISION

Revised Spring 2009

Bellevue Community College's Affirmation of Inclusion

Bellevue Community College is committed to maintaining an environment in which every member of the campus community feels welcome to participate in the life of the college, free from harassment and discrimination. We value our different backgrounds at BCC, and students, faculty, staff members, and administrators are to treat one another with dignity and respect.

The college's "Affirmation of Inclusion" is in line with the principle of free speech in a free society: we have the right to express unpopular ideas as long as we don't show disrespect for reasonable people who might believe otherwise. In an online course, you will be expressing ideas through the medium of the course site rather than face to face in the classroom. In that case, these expectations refer to the courtesy with which you communicate with one another through e-mails and e-

discussions. Part of this respect involves professional behavior towards the instructor, colleagues, and the class itself.

Cheating, Stealing, and Plagiarizing* and Inappropriate Behavior

Cheating, stealing and plagiarizing (using the ideas or words of another as one's own without crediting the source) and inappropriate/disruptive behavior are violations of the Student Code of Conduct at Bellevue Community College. Examples of unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to: plagiarizing material from the Internet and posting rude or personal attacks in discussions. When you are in doubt about any behavior, please consult your instructor. In addition, you may wish to review the general applicable rules of cyberspace, such as in the [Core Rules of Netiquette](#). The instructor reserves the right to remove posted messages, and downgrade assessments as a result of these types of behaviors. The instructor can refer any violation of the Student Code of Conduct to the Vice President of Student Services for possible probation or suspension from Bellevue Community College. Specific student rights, responsibilities and appeal procedures are listed in the Student Code of Conduct, available in the office of the Vice President of Student Services, [link to Student Code](#).

Incomplete

If a student fails to complete all the required work for a course, an instructor may assign the grade of Incomplete ("I"). It is the student's responsibility for maintaining contact and adhering to the agreed-upon actions. Vista class sites, and material, may not be directly accessible after the end of the quarter so it important to make arrangements before the quarter ends. The student must complete the coursework by the end of the next quarter, or receive the assigned letter grade (usually an "F"). There is a standard form that instructors have access to in their instructor's grade briefcase.

F Grade

Students who fail a course will receive a letter grade of "F."

Final Examination Schedule

Final examinations may involve proctored on-campus arranged exams or may be administrated completely online at the discretion of the instructor and in keeping with the stated policies provided in the course syllabus. Please refer to the syllabus at the start of the quarter for additional details and contact the instructor directly

for any clarifications. A student who is not in compliance with the scheduled format may forfeit the right to make up the examination. If, for illness or some other circumstance beyond the student's control, the student is unable to be in compliance with any scheduled examination and has contacted the instructor on a timely basis, the student may be permitted to take such examination at a time designated by the instructor.

Withdrawal From Class

College policy states that students must formally withdraw from a class by the end of the seventh week of the quarter during the standard academic year (Registration Office, B125). If a student has not withdrawn by that date, an appropriate letter grade will be assigned for the course. Check [Enrollment Calendar Deadlines, Refunds/Withdrawals](#), for additional details. As with most enrollment deadlines, it is the student's responsibility to be aware of these dates and act accordingly.

Hardship Withdrawal (HW)

From page 9 of the current course catalog, [2008-2009 online catalog](#), HW indicates a withdrawal request made because of extenuating circumstances after the official withdrawal period is over. The student must contact the instructor to request this withdrawal option, or the faculty member may initiate the contact. No points are calculated into the grade-point average. Students may also contact the Enrollment Services office BEFORE grades are assigned in cases of hardship.

Students Who Require Disability Accommodations:

Students with disabilities who have accommodation needs are encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) [link to DRC](#). The office is located in B132 (telephone 425.564.2498 or TTY 425.564.4110, email drc@bellevuecollege.edu). Students will need to establish their eligibility for accommodation. The DRC office will provide each eligible student with an accommodation letter or contact your online instructor directly by email. Students who require accommodation in a course should review the DRC accommodation letter with each instructor during the first week of the quarter.

Distribution of Grades

Students should access their grades through the BCC Web site. Any returned material should be accessed prior to the end of the quarter. After the end of the quarter, Vista class sites may not be accessible by students. Individual instructors

may use non-Vista tools for recording and maintaining the students' progress. Questions about grades assigned should be initially directed to your instructor.

Submission and Returning of Papers, Assignments and Assessments:

Specific guidelines for taking exams and submitting assignments are published in the syllabus. Please contact instructor at the start of the quarter for any clarifications.

Technical Assistance

Vista-related or technical issues should be referred to Distance Education, [link to Distance Education web resources](#). You may also email them at landerso@bellevuecollege.edu or call 425-564-2438 (1-877-641-2712). Vista tutorial help and basic instructions can be found at <http://bellevuecollege.edu/distance/studentguide/>

**If you are accused of cheating, stealing exams and/or plagiarism, there is a Bellevue Community College Student Discipline and Appeals Procedure (the right to due process) which you may pursue. Contact the office of Division Chair (D110), the Vice President of Student Services (B231A) or the Associated Student Body (C212) for information regarding the appeals process.*