Introduction to Socio-Cultural Anthropology

Prof. Erik Harms (Links to an external site.)

Department of Anthropology (Links to an external site.) : 10 Sachem Street (Links to an external site.), Room 120 erik.harms@ya

Course Meetings: 
- M,W,F, 9:10 -11:15
- Online -- on zoom

Office Hours: TBD

Section Scheduling Doodle:

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to socio-cultural anthropology, the study of human society and culture. Anthropologists write ethnographies based on long-term intensive fieldwork and participant observation and also theorize broadly about “big questions” associated with human sociality: How do cultural models and belief systems influence the ways people interact in social settings? How does power work? What binds people together and what leads to conflict? And so on. This course will introduce students to some of the major themes in modern anthropological thinking about culture, symbolism, and social structure; power and human agency (or “free will”); sex and gender; race and ethnicity; economic relations, commoditization and gift exchange; cosmology and belief systems; and other topics. In addition to introducing students to highlights in the history of anthropological thought, students will read several recent ethnographies exploring the lives of urban drug users, Wall Street i-bankers, and others.

Course Goals:

1. To learn the broad scope and methods of socio-cultural anthropology through cross-cultural analysis of Western and non-Western cultures, including the student’s own.
2. To learn concepts, terminology, and methods related to the comparative study of different forms of social organization, economic systems, and processes of cultural change.
3. To sample anthropological research methods via course projects.
4. To understand how people’s perceptions, beliefs, values and actions are shaped by social and cultural structures, as well as how societies and cultures adapt and change over time.
5. To understand the ethical principles and concerns that inform anthropological research.

Grading:

Major Assignments and their due dates are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Five times throughout the semester, as noted on syllabus and assignment modules</td>
<td>Periodic Hands-on Ethnographic Assignments. [Link to Assignments page]</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In section meetings and lectures

Class Participation in Sections (and where appropriate in Lectures) 100

Periodically

In-Class Pop-quizzes on readings (5 x 20 points each) 100

July 9th

Final Exam in class 100

Final course grades will be calculated as a percentage based on the ratio of total points earned to total points possible. Letter grades will be assigned as follows: A = 94-100; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B = 84-87; B- = 80-83; C+ = 77-79; etc.

Course Policies:

Students must attend all of the scheduled classes and discussion sections unless excused by the instructor. Students anticipating the need to miss class for religious holidays, approved participation in University activities, or other reasonable outside commitments should inform the instructor during the first two weeks of class.

Readings and lectures will complement but not repeat each other. Skip either of them and you will miss out on great opportunities to learn. For those of you who care about grades, skipping readings, lectures or sections will also hurt your chances to succeed on exams. Regular attendance in section meetings will count towards participation grades, and section grades will drop one letter grade (10 points) for every 2 missed sections.

Students must hand in or electronically submit written work on time as directed on the date indicated on this syllabus or on the assignment handout. Unless otherwise noted, work should be double-spaced, using standard 12 point font, with 1 inch margins. Unexcused late work will not receive anything higher than a "B." Students anticipating the need for an extension must forewarn the instructor at least one week in advance. On occasion, students will be asked to submit assignments online using the course website or via email, at the discretion of the TFs leading sections.

Assignments submitted electronically should always be saved as Microsoft Word documents with standardized filenames according to the following format: yourlastname.assignment#.doc (e.g.: “harms.Assignment1.doc”) Unless otherwise noted, the readings indicated for a particular week should be completed by the first class meeting of the week. (Note: Readings marked with a hollow bullet, “○,” are optional).

Don’t plagiarize! If you have questions about citing sources or remain unclear about plagiarism, please feel free to ask the instructor, a TF, or a reference librarian in any of the Yale libraries. If you plagiarize you will fail the class.

Course Materials:

All of the articles and individual book chapters indicated in the course schedule are available as electronic text reserve on the canvas site. The texts are connected by hyperlink in the syllabus below for easy access.

In addition to the online materials, this course has two required books, available for purchase at the Yale Bookstore (Links to an external site).:


*Note on accessing course readings.* In cases where we are reading articles from academic journals, I have tried to link directly to the article and its original journal site, which is good for authors and journals, who track access via the number of clicks. If for some reason the links give you trouble or you find yourself denied access, the articles are also saved as pdfs in the "files ---> readings" section of this canvas course site.

**Course Schedule:**

**INTRODUCTION: What is Social-Cultural Anthropology?**

**Day 1: Course Introduction / Cultural Meaning, Social Structure, Power, and Human Agency**

June 7

Before Class read these texts:

- **Bohannan, Laura. 1966.** *Shakespeare in the Bush.* *Natural History* August-September: 1-12. (Links to an external site.) Also available at: [http://www.naturalhistorymag.com/editors_pick/1966_08-09_pick.html](http://www.naturalhistorymag.com/editors_pick/1966_08-09_pick.html) (Links to an external site.)

**PART ONE: Cultural Meaning and Social Structure**

**Day 2: Encounters with Cultural Difference**

June 9

Topic A: Entering the Field and Engaging Cultural Difference

- **“Arrival Stories”** Selected excerpts from ethnographies by Philippe Bourgois, João Biehl, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Clifford Geertz, Bronislaw Malinowski, Laura Nader and Zoe Todd.

Topic B: Culture, Ethnography, and Meaning

- **Siegel, James, T.** *“Academic Work: The View from Cornell.”* *Diacritics* 11, no. 1 (1981): 68-83. (Links to an external site.)
**Begin Assignment 1: Observation Fieldnotes (Upload to Canvas by TBD)**

Day 3: The Power of Rituals and Symbols

June 11

Topic A: The Efficacy of Symbols


Topic B: The Ritual Process


Day 4: Cosmology and Social Construction

June 14

Topic A: Worldview, Cosmology, and Fetishism

- Watch "the Kayapo" (55 min.) [https://search.library.yale.edu/catalog/14654479?counter=1](https://search.library.yale.edu/catalog/14654479?counter=1) [click on "streaming video"]
- film viewing guide available here: $CANVAS_COURSE_REFERENCE$/file_ref/g2bd8d676520b27072edfd5e3a2f682ba/download?download_frd=1

Link to in-class discussion of "The Kayapo" film. [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1M6x8pNPlSGwB8F1T3_nymJ4tNpOptDNZnnqwED1dy20/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1M6x8pNPlSGwB8F1T3_nymJ4tNpOptDNZnnqwED1dy20/edit?usp=sharing)

Topic B: Gender as Power, Gender as Meaning

**Begin Assignment 2: Worldview as Social Practice (Upload to Canvas by TBD) [Link]**

Day 5: Ties that Bind
June 16

Topic A: Gift Giving and Exchange as Alternative Economy and Social Bond


Topic B: Kinship as Social Bond

• Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1989. Death Without Weeping: Has poverty ravaged mother love in the shantytowns of Brazil? Natural History 98 (10 (October)):8, 10, 12, 14, 16.

**Begin Assignment 3: Ties that Bind (Upload to Canvas by Monday, Week 7) [Note that this date has been changed] from week 6) [Link]**

PART TWO: Structures of Power

Day 6: Domination, Structural Violence and Other Injustices
June 18

Topic A: Structural Violence and other forms of Power

Topic B: Open Class discussion of applying analysis of power to society

**Day 7: Economic Power, The Power Elite**

June 21

Topic: Studying Up


**Begin Assignment 4: Encounters with Smartness and Hard Work** (Due Monday, Week 10) [Link]

**Day 8: Tracing Pathways of Power**

June 23

Topic: Power is Bigger than the Individual

- Ho, Karen. 2009. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, Selections from Ch.7 (318-324).

**PART THREE: Resistance and the Question of Human Agency**

**Day 9: Marginality and Resistance, part 1**

June 25th

Topic: Representing Oppression and Marginality


**Day 10: Marginality and Resistance, Part 2**

June 28th

Topic: Making Money and Alternative Economies

- Bourgois, *Righteous Dopefiend*: Chapter 5, Chapter 7, Chapter 9, Conclusion

***Begin Assignment 5: Money Matters (Upload to Canvas by TBD) ** [Link]

Day 11: Critical Studies of Race

June 30th

Tuesday, 13 April: Race, Power and Structural Injustice

• TallBear, Kim. 2013. "Genomic articulations of indigeneity." Social Studies of Science 43(4): 509-533. [If link is not working, click here ] **Note: this was meant to be assigned reading, but human error by prof. Harms somehow failed. Will explain the article in class.**
• Watch this FILM: Herskovits at the Heart of Blackness [If link doesn’t work, access through the library catalog and select “streaming video” link: https://search.library.yale.edu/catalog/14131366?counter=2 ] (Remember to sign in to VPN before following the links).

Day 12: The Violence of Borders and the Meaning of Violence

July 2

Topic A: “Scapes” and Escapes: Critical Anthropologies of Global Migration and Mobility

  o (optional) Lindquist, Johan. 2004. "Veils and ecstasy: negotiating shame in the Indonesian Borderlands." Ethnos69(4): 487-508. (Links to an external site.) **Note: This optional text was previously required reading, but it has been made optional to reduce reading burden in last weeks of class**

Topic B: Culture, Conflict and Violence as Meaning Making

• Ghassem-Fachandi, Parvis. 2010. "Ahimsa, identification and sacrifice in the Gujarat pogrom." Social Anthropology 18(2): 155-175. (Links to an external site.) [If link does not work, check here]
  o (optional) Hinton, Alex. 1998. Why Did You Kill?: The Cambodian Genocide and the Dark Side of Face and Honor. Journal of Asian Studies 57 (1):93–122. **Note: This optional text was previously required reading, but it has been made optional to reduce reading burden in last weeks of class**
  o (optional) McGovern, Mike. 2010 “This is Play” in Anne–Maria Makhulu, Beth A Buggenhausen & Stephen Jackson. (2010). Hard Work, Hard Times: Global Volatility and African Subjectivities http://escholarship.org/uc/item/24b027x0 **Note: This
optional text was previously required reading, but it has been made optional to reduce reading burden in last weeks of class

Day 13: Anthropology Matters

July 5th

Topic A: Anthropology in the Public Sphere


Topic B: Anthropology Beyond Academia

- (optional) Howell, Signe. 2010. "Norwegian Academic Anthropologists in Public Spaces." Current Anthropology 51(S2): S269-S277. (Links to an external site.)

***Today's class will consist of a panel discussion with two anthropologists use their anthropological knowledge outside of academic settings.***

Day 13: Course Conclusion

July 7th

Course Conclusion Discussion

Day 14: Final exam

Friday July 9th: In class exam

Department of Anthropology Location: 10 Sachem Street