INTRODUCTION TO SOCIO-CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

ANTH S110 01 (Summer 2023)

CLASS TIMES: M-W-F, 9:00 – 11:15 am, July 3 - August 4, Yale Summer Session, 2023

INSTRUCTOR: Matthew L. O’Malley

EMAIL: matthew.omalley@yale.edu

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF COURSE:

An introduction to the central ideas, methods, and debates that make up the anthropological study of human thought and behavior. Survey of dynamic ways of life in many different societies; outline of the ways anthropologists have tried to understand societies. Hands-on ethnographic research provides insight into how cultural anthropologists do what they do—what problems they encounter and what tools and techniques they use for research and analysis.

EXTENDED DESCRIPTION:

This course provides students with an introduction to the themes, concepts and methods of socio-cultural anthropology—the study of diverse human societies around the world (including ourselves and our contemporaries), and how they are related, through analysis of humanity’s various languages, religions, political-economic structures, and everyday ways of living. We will learn about the development of the discipline of cultural anthropology, and examine its characteristic research problems: from classic debates about kinship, prohibitions, racial difference, exchange, and cultural diversity, to current questions about markets, political life in a precarious and changing environment, racism and antiblackness, rural America, conspiracy theories, and how people grapple with global systems in their individual lives.

We will analyze particular forms of human thought, expression, and social order in their cultural and historical context, and then put our understanding of difference, variation, and relativity to work, exploring how diverse perspectives and experiences can help offer a better-grounded and more comprehensive understanding of contemporary events and processes. Among the questions we will address are: What is culture, and how it is created and maintained across generations? How and why do human societies exchange goods, organize consumption and celebration, and how do these activities provide both material goods and meaningful order for everyday life? How does individual experience relate to broader ideas about race, gender, and culture? And, how have recent technological and political transformations transformed the experiences and expectations of ordinary life?

READING LIST FOR SUMMER COURSE IS BELOW:
READINGS:

WEEK 1 ● BEGINNINGS OF A DISCIPLINE (CLASSIC SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY)

MONDAY • Marcel Mauss, excerpts from A General Theory of Magic

WEDNESDAY • Marcel Mauss, from On Prayer

FRIDAY • Marcel Mauss, from The Gift: An Essay on the Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies

WEEK 2 ● TRANSGRESSION, TABOO, SACRIFICE, EXPENDITURE, RENEWAL


FRIDAY • Daniella Gandolfo, selections from The City as Its Limit: Taboo, Transgression, & Urban Renewal in Lima (2009)

WEEK 3 ● ANTHROPOLOGY OF STORY, STORYTELLING, CONSPIRACY, & MARGINALIZATION IN AMERICA

MONDAY • Susan Lepselter The Resonance of Unseen Things: Poetics, Power, Captivity, and UFOs in the American Uncanny

WEDNESDAY • Susan Lepselter, The Resonance of Unseen Things: Poetics, Power, Captivity, and UFOs in the American Uncanny

FRIDAY • Joseph C. Russo, Hard Luck & Heavy Rain: The Ecology of Stories in Southeast Texas

WEEK 4 ● BLACK ANTHROPOLOGY: ABOLITION, AFTERLIVES, RACE, SEXUALITY

MONDAY • Savannah Shange, Progressive Dystopia: Abolition, Antiblackness, & Schooling in San Francisco: “Mapping an Abolitionist Anthropology” – Ch. 1 - 3

WEDNESDAY • Savannah Shange, Progressive Dystopia: Abolition, Antiblackness, & Schooling in San Francisco: “Border Management, Carceral Progressivism, & the Afterlives of Slavery” Ch. 5 -7

FRIDAY • Vaness Agard-Jones, Memory, Racialized Landscapes, & Queer Invisibility: “What the Sands Remember” & “Bodies in the System”
**WEEK 5 • ANTHROPOCENE: OR, THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF DEEP TIME, LOST TIME, MOURNING, AND VULNERABILITY**

**MONDAY • Hugh Raffles, The Book of Uncomformities: Speculations on Lost Time**

**WEDNESDAY • Hugh Raffles, The Book of Uncomformities: Speculations on Lost Time**

**FRIDAY • Hugh Raffles, The Book of Uncomformities: Speculations on Lost Time**

**REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Do the readings and be active in discussing them each class (20% of grade).

2. Weekly reading responses, 1-2 pages long (20%), due at the beginning of the class we discuss them. Must constitute clear evidence that you carefully did the reading, and so are ready to actively participate in the seminar.

3. Midterm essay/project: careful summary, synthesis, use (and possibly critique) of 2-3 readings in first half of class (30%), potentially using student's own ethnographic data, 10 (double-spaced) pages long. Due Monday, July 16th.

4. Final essay/project: careful summary, synthesis, use (and possibly critique) of 2-3 readings in first half of class (30%), using student’s own ethnographic data, 10 (double-spaced) pages long. Due Monday, August 6th.

**NOTES:**

1. Cellphones must be turned off during class.

2. No exceptions to assignment due-dates.

3. Students will formulate both their midterm and final essays/projects in dialogue with other students, and in consultation with me. The papers will turn on readings and topics discussed in class, but can take into account issues and events outside of class readings if relevant. For both papers, students are expected to start formulating a topic and thesis at least two weeks before the due date. As the first-paper is underway, and through our close analysis of each of the readings, we will discuss strategies for topic-choice, the relation between evidence and argument, conventions of scholarly citation, the methods of ethnographic research, and the techniques of ethnographic writing. Through these step-by-step processes, students will produce demonstrably singular essays, while learning the craft of ethnographic research and writing, the ethics of academic integrity and scholarship, and the pleasures of creative inquiry.

4. **Academic Integrity:** Yale College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases
of academic dishonesty according to the College Academic Integrity Procedures. For students unsure about Yale’s stance on plagiarism, please see the following link:

http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/advice-students/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism

5. Disability Statement: In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Yale College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please contact the Yale Summer Session.

6. Re: the list of readings above, I reserve the right to add and/or prune readings as we go.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to 1) Identify key anthropological thinkers and concepts; 2) Explain their contribution to understandings of culture, power, and difference; 3) Produce persuasive arguments about key public issues using anthropological understandings of cultural relativity; and 4) Analyze systems of differentiation including gender, ethnicity, and class.