Anthropology of Melanesia
University of Hawai‘i at Manoa
Anthropology 449 Fall 2010

About
Day: M, W, F  Instructor: Alex Golub
Time: 11:30-12:20  Phone: 956-6576
Location: Saunders 345  Email: golub@hawaii.edu
Office Hours: Monday, 1-3 pm, Saunders 313

Description
This course is designed to familiarize students with the cultures of the area known as
Melanesia: the countries of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Fiji, and Vanuatu, as well
as New Caledonia (part of France) and Papua (part of Indonesia). This semester our focus will
be on Papua and Papua New Guinea. The class will be organized in a discussion format, and
will consist of a close reading of a small number of works. The focus will be on a deep
understanding of cultural systems, and how anthropologists analyze them, with a particular
emphasis on concepts of alterity -- what it means to be ‘other’.

This class begins with Madventures Papua, a TV travel show in which two Finnish backpackers
tavel to the Korowai area of West Papua. This is the most exoticizing, othering depiction of
Melanesians I was able to find. The class begins by asking the question: what truth, if any, is
there to the representations of Melanesians in this piece?

Before returning to the Korowai we begin with Ira Bashkow’s superb ethnography of Orokaiva
on north coast Papua New Guinea. How does Bashkow’s analysis of Orokaiva fascination with
whites illuminate white fascination with blacks? We then turn to the important topic of
indigenous anthropology, and do a close reading of several papers by John Waiko, an Orokaiva
historian who writes about his own people. Beginning with the documentary about his own
return to the village after schooling abroad, we add his perspective to the play of cross-cultural
approaches at work in the course.

Finally, we return to a close reading of Rupert Stasch’s ethnography of the Korowai, combined
with several other documentaries of the area. How well did students expectations of
Madventures stack up against Stasch’s ethnography, and in particular of Stasch’s own analysis
of western depictions of Korowai culture?

We end the course with some more imaginative readings related to Melanesia, including a short
story by the science fiction writer Ursula K. LeGuin which imagines an alien society built
around values similar to the Korowai. We will also have a chance to skype with Rupert Stasch
and ask him about his ethnography. In conclusion we ponder some of the abstract issues the
course is built around: how can we know the other -- and isn’t everyone an other?

This course has an A (area) designation

Who Should Take This Course
Upper-class, honors, or smart and ambitious undergraduates.  
**Anthropology graduate students -- this class has an A (area) designation.**
Anyone who is interested in Melanesia, Papua, or Papua New Guinea.  
Anyone interested in ethnography -- how to read it, and how to do anthropological analysis of culture.

**After You Finish This Class You Should Be Able To:**
• Find and label the countries of Melanesia and their capitals on a map.
• Compare your own studies and experiences with Melanesia: When you go to a wedding or read about towns in Morocco, you should be able to think to yourself ‘now how would they do this in Papua New Guinea?’
• Analyze ethnographic materials in the same way as the authors we read.
• Rock other anthropology classes with your superb analysis of the rhetorical structure of the ethnographies you read.
• Explain the cultures of Melanesia in the broader context of colonialism and decolonization: the next time someone tells you the Solomon Islands is full of primitive headhunters, you should be able to convince them they are wrong.
• Participate in an academic seminar in which a class discusses ethnographic texts

**Assignments**
There are 300 points available to earn in this class. Grades will be awarded based on points earned:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>300-290</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>289-280</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>279-270</td>
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<tr>
<td>269-260</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>259-250</td>
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<td>179-170</td>
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Points will be earned on the basis of the following work:

**Attendance (60)**
There are 35 sessions in class this semester. You earn 2 points for attending each one.

**Midterm (50)**
This will be a five-page take-home paper which asks you to analyze how a short piece works, ethnographically.

**Participation (120)**
Simply coming to class is not enough. We will also be discussing the material using a ‘fishbowl’ discussion method. I will explain this in detail later as the exact details will be affected by total enrollment. Basically some students will be responsible for leading discussion each class, probably about 10 times in the course of class for about 12 points each time.

**Final (70)**
This will be a seven-page take-home final paper which asks you to compare and contrast two pieces we have read in class (I will explain exactly how this works later)

**Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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| 22 Aug - 28 Aug  | Introduction  
Madventures, Papua  
Osbourne “Strangers In The Forest”  
Said, Orientalism (selections from the Said reader) |
| 29 Aug - 4 Sep   | Bashkow, “The Meaning of Whitemen” ch. 1 (skip chapter outline)  
Wardle ch.1 to page 26  
Bashkow ch 2 pp.26-53  
*Attendance begins*  
Bashkow ch 2 53-63  
Wardle ch. 2  
Map quiz |
| 5 Sep - 11 Sep   | Labor Day, No Class  
Bashkow pp. 95-120 (ch. 4 first half) Wardle ch. 2  
Bashkow pp. 120-144 (ch. 4 second half) Wardle ch. 3 |
| 12 Sep - 18 Sep  | Bashkow pp. 145-163 (ch. 5 first half) Wardle ch. 4  
Bashkow pp. 163-187 (ch. 5 second half) Wardle ch. 5  
Bashkow pp. 187-208 (ch 5 third half) Wardle ch. 6 |
| 19 Sep - 25 Sep  | Bashkow pp. 209-234 (ch 6 part 1) Wardle ch. 7  
Bashkow pp. 235-259 (ch 6 part 2) Wardle ch. 8  
Midterm Hand-out  
Film: Man Without Pigs (part I) |
| 26 Sep - 2 Oct   | Midterm Due  
Film: Man Without Pigs (part II)  
Morauta, “Indigenous Anthropology in Papua New Guinea”  
Waiko, Oian Dumbari: My Sojourns Away From Home |
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Reading/Activity</th>
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Waiko, “Head” and “Tail: The Shaping of Oral Traditions Among the Binandere”  
Waiko, “Australian Administration Under The Binandere Thumb” |
| 10 Oct - 16 | Waiko, “Conservation in Papua New Guinea”  
Waiko, “Oral Traditions Among the Binandere”  
Skype with Bashkow |
Stasch 1-14  
Stasch 14-23 |
Stasch 38-54  
Stasch 54-72 |
| 31 Oct - 6 Nov | Stasch 73-89  
Stasch 89-104  
Stasch 105-126 |
| 7 Nov - 13 Nov | Stasch 126-139  
Stasch 140-158  
Stasch, 158-172 |
| 14 Nov - 20 Nov | Stasch, 208-233  
Stasch, 233-254  
Stasch, Conclusion |
<p>| 21 Nov - 27 Nov | Movie: “Madventures Papua” |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>28 Nov - 4 Dec</td>
<td>Stasch</td>
<td>Textual Iconicity and the Primitivist Cosmos</td>
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<td>5 Dec - 11 Dec</td>
<td>Stasch</td>
<td>skype in-class meeting</td>
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*Ursula K LeGuin, Solitude*

*F Nov 26 Thanksgiving break do not come to class*