Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Objectives

This course is an introduction to cultural anthropology. It fulfills the Global and Multicultural Perspectives requirement of the General Education Core. At the heart of anthropology is the concept of culture, the knowledge and practice that people use to make sense of their everyday lives and engage with others. Bound up with the concept of culture is sensitivity to differences and the possibility of alternative ways of perceiving and living in the world.

Learning objectives for the course include:
1. Learn to think anthropologically, including an appreciation for issues of diversity and commonality across culture.
2. Develop the ability to think critically about cultural assumptions to assess their effect on our understanding of contemporary issues.
3. Gain a wider appreciation for the range of cultural difference through the study of the social and cultural dimensions of diverse populations.
4. Provide a basic understanding of the ideas and tools of cultural anthropology.

The course involves a combination of lectures, readings, films, and exercises conducted inside and outside of class. Regular participation is expected. The core text is *Social and Cultural Anthropology: A Short Introduction*. The remainder of course reading consists of three books that exemplify the nature of ethnographic writing about distinct cultural worlds (Trobriand Islands in the Pacific; Hawai‘i: and the Caribbean society of Jamaica). We will use these books to explore various styles of anthropological research and analysis. Discussion of “ethnography” and “fieldwork”—practices that define the field—will be augmented with student projects that provide the opportunity to learn about anthropology firsthand by doing ethnography.

Requirements

Course requirements include a midterm (25%) and final (30%) exam, film responses (10%), two “fieldwork” projects [5 pages each] focused on family genealogy (15%) and cell phones as cultural artifacts (15%), and regular participation (5%).
Readings: Required Books (available in UH bookstore)
Social and Cultural Anthropology: A Short Introduction, John Monaghan & Peter Just
The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea by Annette Weiner
Lady Friends: Hawaiian Ways and the Ties That Define by Karen Ito
The Cell Phone: An Anthropology of Communication by Heather Horst & Daniel Miller

Week by week outline:

I. INTRODUCTION: CULTURE

1. Jan 12: Introduction
   no reading assigned

2. Jan 14: The Culture Concept
   reading: Monaghan & Just, Introduction (1-12) and Ch 2, “Bee Larvae and Onion Soup.” (34-52) [NOTE: after the Intro, skip to Chapter 2. Chapter 1 is for next week]
   film: Representation & the Media

II. FIELDWORK

   reading: Monaghan & Just, Ch 1, “A Dispute in Donggo: Fieldwork and Ethnography.” (13-33)

4. Jan 21: Practicing anthropology II
   reading: Weiner, “Introduction” (1-15); Ito (ix – xi, 1-16)
   film: Anthropology on Trial: Papua New Guinea

III. CULTURE & SOCIAL FABRIC: TROBRIAND ISLANDS

5. Jan 26: Culture & Society
   reading: Monaghan & Just, Ch 3, “A Brief Encounter: Society” (53-74)

6. Jan 28: 
   reading: Weiner Ch 1 (17-31)
   film: The Trobriand Islanders

7. Feb 2: Death and loss
   reading: Weiner Ch 2 “Death and the Work of Mourning” (33-50)

8. Feb 4: Ancestry and webs of kinship
   reading: Weiner Ch 3 “Fathers and Matrilineality” (51-64)
   Monaghan & Just, Ch 4, “Fernando Seeks a Wife: Sex and Blood.” (75-88)
9. Feb 9: Gender and sexuality. **GENEALOGY PROJECT DUE**
reading: Weiner Ch 4 “Youth and sexuality” (65-79)

**IV. CULTURE, POWER & POLITICS**

reading: Weiner Ch 5 “Marriage and the Politics of Yams” (81-96)
    Monaghan & Just, Ch 6, “A Feast in Nuyoo: People and their Things.” (107-119)
film: *Trobiand Cricket*

11. Feb 16: Politics and Power
reading: Weiner Ch 6, “Chiefs and Hierarchy” (97-110)
    Monaghan & Just, Ch 5, “La Bose Becomes Bakar: Caste, Class, Tribe, Nation

12. Feb 18: Kinship and gender
reading: Weiner Ch 7 “Men Working for Women” (111-123)

13. Feb 23: Ancestors, land, kin
reading: Weiner Ch 8, “The Regeneration of Matrilineality” (125-138)
    Monaghan & Just, Ch 7, “A Drought in Bima: People and their Gods.” (120-130)

14. Feb 25: Exchange
reading: Weiner Ch 9, “Kula and the Search for Fame” (139-157)
film: *Kula: Ring of Fire*

15. March 2: REVIEW SESSION
reading: Weiner Ch 10, “Conclusion” (159-167)

16. March 4: **MIDTERM EXAM**

**V. (RE)PRODUCING CULTURAL IDENTITIES**

17. March 9:
reading: Ito Ch 1, “Lady Friends and Their Island Home” (17-49)

18. March 11: Culture, ethnicity, and nationalism
reading: Ito Ch 2, “Comeback and the Ties that Bind” (50-75)
    Monaghan & Just, Ch 8, “Nanuu Maria Gets Hit by Lightning” (131-143)

19. March 16:
reading: Ito Ch 3, “My Heart is in my Friend: The Ties that Define” (76-115)
20. March 18:  
reading: Ito, Ch 4, “Ho’oponopono and Conflict Resolution” (116-144)  
reading: Ito, “Conclusion” (145-149)  

MARCH 22-26: SPRING BREAK  

VI. CULTURE, TECHNOLOGY & SOCIETY  

21. March 30:  
reading: Horst & Miller, (1-18)  

22. April 1:  
reading: Horst & Miller, (19-36)  
film: Life and Debt  

23. April 6:  
reading: Horst & Miller, (37-58)  

24. April 8:  
reading: Horst & Miller, (59-80)  

25. April 13:  
reading: Horst & Miller, (81-102)  

26. April 15:  
reading: Horst & Miller, (103-122)  

27. April 20:  
reading: Horst & Miller, (123-136)  

28. April 22  
reading: Horst & Miller, (137-158)  

29. April 27: CELL PHONE PROJECT DUE  
reading: Horst & Miller, (159-182)  

30. April 29:  
Monaghan & Just, “Afterward: Some Things We’ve Learned” (144-146)  

31. May 4: [REVIEW SESSION]  
no reading assigned  

33. May 13: 12 – 2 pm: **FINAL EXAM**