

Key Concepts in Ethnology
Department of Anthropology
Lakehead University
ANTH-2515
Fall 2019

Instructor: Frederico Oliveira, PhD
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Dates of Appointments: September 3rd to November 28th, 2019
Classes Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 4pm to 5:30 pm (OA2019)
Office: OR-1041
Office Hours: Tue/Thu: 12-2pm (or by appointment)

Course Description and Objectives:

The understanding and explanation of cultural diversity worldwide is the focus of study of sociocultural anthropologists. The meaning and purposes underlying the study of different cultures has changed considerably since the origins of the discipline from the end of the 19th century until the current days. Economic interests, political agendas, ethics and intellectual commitments have informed distinct views of the so-called “object” of study in anthropology; “the Other” and how it should be approached and described. This course is intended to present the core concepts that inform anthropological thought and research since the early moments of the discipline until the present. The progress of the readings and discussions is organized in two units: 1) Key concepts discussed in the light of classical schools and some contemporary examples; 2) Recent and controversial debates, including periods of transition, internal crisis and moments of theoretical and practical significance regarding the essential relationship between anthropology and cultural diversity. The successful students are expected in the end of the course to be able to:

- a) Examine some of the broader questions underlying the main theories, concepts and intellectual debates;
- b) Understand how anthropologists elaborate research questions and approach their data;
- c) Be familiar with scientific papers and their structural organization;
- d) Develop, at least from the introductory level, the capacity to critically look and think anthropologically about social phenomena;
- e) Enhance their abilities to critically think, read, propose research questions and write in ways appropriate to the discipline.

The course is organized around lectures and class discussions. We will go through some of the conceptual ideas about a particular topic in the initial sessions of each week and then broader discussions will be proposed to expand such concepts or theoretical debates in the second session. Discussions will form an important part of the learning process and will revolve around current and controversial issues in anthropology. Student attendance and participation is essential.

These are some of the debates and concepts that will be addressed during the course:

- Ethnocentrism and cultural relativism
- Structure and history
- Classification and Cognition (Rationalism vs. Empiricism)
- Is Language the essence of culture?
- Are humans worlds culturally constructed?
- What is myth?
- Qualitative and quantitative research
- Universalism vs. Particularism
- Individual and society: where is the agency?
- Limitations of the comparative method
- Anthropology as science or literature?
- Alterity and the self
- Ethnography and theory
- Ethnographic authority and post-modernism
- Human rights and anthropological relativism
- Primitivism and the search for authenticity of the exotic Other

Course Readings:

A number of articles and book chapters are required readings and are listed below for each week. All are available electronically at the course website.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Graded assignments include the following:

Class Participation
20% of course grade

Reading Notes
15% of course grade

Debate Facilitation
15% of course grade

Mid-Term in Class Essay
20% of course grade

Final Paper
30% of course grade

Class Participation: Attendance is mandatory. Reading (sometimes a lot) and attendance are critical to achieve a satisfactory grade and learning objectives in this course. Students are required to critically read all assigned materials prior to class and participate actively (in your own way) in class discussions and assignments. Students are allowed three absences without penalty (due to

illness, emergency, travel, etc.). Subsequent unjustified absences will result in the loss of 5 points for each absence. Active and informed participation in discussion will usually raise your grade.

Reading Notes: Reading notes assigned for each week must be completed by the start of the first class of that week (typed 1-2 pages, 1.5 space between the lines). For example, classes are scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays at 4:00pm. Reading notes are due by Tuesday at 11am to be sent to the instructor's email (foliveir@lakeheadu.ca). Students are required to deliver eight readings notes during the semester and allowed to miss one delivery. It is also mandatory that in the end of each reading note you elaborate three questions that can generate debate with the class. Reading notes are not summaries of the readings. To achieve a satisfactory grade, you are expected to present and discuss relevant points of the readings, bring examples, make associations with daily life situations, etc. These are some directions that can help you improve the quality of your reading notes: 1) make an effort to understand which of the problems the author is aiming to address. Try to see the big picture; 2) If you do not agree with the author, on what basis do you explain your disagreement? If you agree, explain as well. 3) Criticize fairly; do not make judgment based on personal opinion, taste, or preference; 4) Is the argument internally consistent? Does the evidence (both that offered by the author and other evidence in the field) validate the argument?

Debate Facilitation: During the second class of each week (Thursday) 3 or 4 students will be responsible to facilitate a brief debate. These students will be pre-selected in the previous week and asked to present their notes and the questions they submitted with their Reading Notes. Each student is required to participate at least 2 times in the debate facilitations during the semester. More details will be provided for this assignment.

Mid-Term in Class Essay: Students will be given a list of essay questions in the day of the test. Normally, you will have a list of 4-5 questions and you have to choose two of them to elaborate your answers in class. There will be a handout explaining in details this assignment and providing general tips of the questions that will be given and the expected format of the essays.

Final Project: For this assignment, students will be given a list of themes to choose from in order to elaborate their final projects about a topic in anthropological theory. Students will prepare an oral presentation to be given on the final week of class. Students will also organize a written paper to be delivered in the following week. The Final Paper follows the format of a research paper. This assignment allows students to develop an in depth reflection of a course topic that interests them. Students are supposed to select a subject suggested by the instructor or they may also come up with a topic and discuss with the instructor. Required length: 2000-3000 words or 5-8 pages, excluding bibliography. There will be a handout explaining the details of this assignment.

Policies and Procedures:

Grading Policy:

Assignments will be evaluated primarily on the basis of a student's understanding of the material presented in the course. Other factors that figure in evaluation of assignments include creative and critical insight, and writing (clarity, coherence, and organization).

General Course Policies:

1. Avoid disrupting class by arriving late, leaving early, and/or allowing your cell phone to sound in class. Repeated disruptions will result first in a warning and then in a 5% penalty to the student's final grade. If the student's behaviour is disturbing the learning environment of the class he/she will be asked to leave. If you have to leave early inform the instructor in the beginning of the class.
2. It is expected that students will be respectful of their fellow students, their instructor, and cultures and traditions which are not their own.
3. Plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., that belong to someone else. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of that person. This is serious issue. Violation of the university's policy will result in a grade penalty or failure of the course. This type of violation will stay in your academic record.
4. Assignments must be delivered on time. Penalties will be applied for late or not delivered assignments.
5. The final date to drop the course is November 8th, 2019.
6. Students are responsible for taking their own lecture notes. Course outline, journal articles and book chapters will be posted online on Desire2Learn at least one week prior to the due date. All the course readings will be provided as scanned PDF documents, posted on Desire2Learn.
7. The main communication tool between the instructor and students is Lakehead University's e-mail account. Students are asked to check regularly (including before the class) their LakeheadU e-mail account and Desire2Learn for unforeseen changes to the class due to weather conditions or other reasons. As a general rule, student questions sent 24 hours prior to an assignment or test will not be replied. Students can reasonably expect a response in 1-2 days. Grades are supposed to be returned to the students at the maximum period of two weeks after the assignment is delivered.
8. Students are welcome to schedule personal appointments to discuss any topic related to their academic progress or course content.
9. This syllabus is subject to minor changes during the course of the semester.

Course Schedule

UNIT 1: Key Concepts

Week 1:

(Sept-3)

(Sept-5)

Introduction to the Course / Film Exhibition

Week 2:

(Sept-10)

(Sept-12)

Culture and Society

Kottak, Conrad. (2011). *Cultural Anthropology: Appreciating Cultural Diversity* (Chapter 2). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rapport, Nigel and Overing Joanna. (2000). (Culture) 92-102; (Society) 333-342. In: *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The key concepts*. London and New York Routledge.

Week 3:

(Sept-17)

(Sept-19)

Ethnography and Participant Observation

Malinowski, Bronislaw. [1922]. "Excerpts from the Argonauts of the Western Pacific". In: *Paradigms for Anthropology*. 2010. (Paul Durrenberger & Suzam Erem, eds.), pp. 2-20.

Richardson, Milles. (2010). "How it works in the Global world: Anthropologist the myth teller". In: *Paradigms for Anthropology*. (Paul Durrenberger & Suzam Erem, eds.), pp. 21-41.

Week 4:

(Sept-24)

(Sept-26)

Worldview and Religion

Lavenda, Robert H & Schultx, Emily A. (2017). *Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology* (Chapter 4: Worldview and Religion). New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Evans-Pritchard. (1937). "Witchcraft is and Organic and Hereditary Phenomenon" (Chapter 1 from *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*).

Evans-Pritchard. (1937). "The Notion of Witchcraft Explains Unfortunate Events" (Chapter 4 from *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*).

Week 5:**Symbols and Myth**

(Oct-1)

(Oct-3)

Moore, Jerry. (2009). Claude Lévi-Strauss: "Structuralism" (Chapter 17). In: *Visions of Culture*. Lanham: Altamira Press.

Claude Lévi-Strauss. (1977). "Introduction: History and Anthropology" (from *Structural Anthropology*, Vol.1)

Claude Lévi-Strauss: (1977). "The Effectiveness of Symbols" (from *Structural Anthropology*, Vol.1).

Claude Lévi-Strauss: (1983). "*Four Winnebago Myths: A Structural Sketch*" (from *Structural Anthropology*, Vol.2)

Week 6:**Interpretivism and Cultural Construction of the World**

(Oct-8)

(Oct-10)

Rapport, Nigel and Overing Joanna. (2000). (Code) 41-51; (World-Making and World View) 391-404.; (Interpretation) 206-211; (Thick Description) 349-353. In: *Social and Cultural Anthropology: The key concepts*. London and New York Routledge.

Clifford Geertz: "Deep Play: notes on a Balinese cockfight" (from *Daedalus Journal*).

Week 7:**Reading Week**

(No Class: Thanksgiving & Study Week, Oct 14-18)

Week 8:

(Oct-22)

Film

(Oct-24)

**** Mid-Term in Class Essay ******UNIT 2: Current Issues in Anthropology****Week 9:****Kinship, Alterity and the Boundaries of Difference**

(Oct-29)

(Oct-31)

Carsten, Janet. (2000). "Knowing Where You've Come from: Ruptures and continuities of Time and Kinship in Narratives of Adoption Reunions". In: *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 6(4): 687-703.

Clarke, Morgan. (2007). "Closeness in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Debating Kinship and Biomedicine in Lebanon and the Middle East". In: *Anthropological Quarterly*, 8(2): 379-402.

Stolcke, Verena. (1995). Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetoric of Exclusion in Europe. *Current Anthropology*, 36(1): 1-24.

Week 10:

The Crisis of Representation and Hybrid Identities

(Nov-5)

(Nov-7)

Clifford James. (1983). "On Ethnographic Authority". In: *Representations*, 1(2), pp. 118-146.

Said, Edward. "Knowing the Oriental" [1979] in *History of Anthropological Theory* (Paul Erickson & Liam Murphy, eds. pp. 324-336).

Warry, Wayne. (2007) *Ending Denial: Understanding Aboriginal Issues* (Introduction and Chapter 5). Toronto: Broadview Press.

Week 11:

Human Rights and Cultural Relativism

(Nov-12)

(Nov-14)

Donnelly, Jack. (1984). "Cultural Relativism and Human Rights". In: *Human Rights Quarterly*, 6(4): 400-419.

Shell-Duncan, Betina. (2008). "From Health to Human Rights: Female Genital Cutting and the Politics of Intervention". In: *American Anthropology*, 110 (2): 225-236.

Gusterson, Hugh. (1996). *Nuclear Rites: A Weapons Laboratory at the End of Cold War* (Chapter 5: Bodies and Machines). Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Week 12:

Global Cultures and Postmodernity

(Nov-19)

(Nov-21)

Wolf, Eric. (1982). Introduction [Europe and the People Without History] in *History of Anthropological Theory* (Paul Erickson & Liam Murphy, eds. pp. 377-392).

Ong, Aihwa. (2006). Introduction. In: *Neoliberalism by Exception, Exception as Neoliberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Appadurai, Arjun. (1990). Disjuncture and Difference. In: *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory* (Paul Erickson & Liam Murphy, eds. pp. 511-518).

Week 13:**** Final Project Presentations ****

(Nov-26)

(Nov-28)

Desire2Learn

The course uses Desire2Learn for its course website. To access the course website, or any other Desire2Learn-based course website, go to the LU portal login page at <https://lakeheadu.desire2learn.com/> and log in using your LU username and password. Once you have logged in to the portal, look for the **mycourselink** module, where you'll find the link to our course website along with the link to all other Desrise2Learn-based courses you are registered.

Accessibility Needs

Lakehead University is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible.