

**Anthropology of Relations  
Department of Anthropology  
Lakehead University  
ANTH-3711  
Fall 2022**

**Instructor:** Frederico Oliveira, PhD  
**Email:** foliveir@lakeheadu.ca  
**Dates of Appointments:** September 7, 2022, to November 30, 2022  
**Classes Hours:** Wednesdays from 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm (OA-2006)  
**Office:** OR-1041

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**Land Acknowledgment:**

Lakehead University respectfully acknowledges its campuses are located on the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples.

Lakehead University acknowledges the history that many nations hold in the areas around our campuses and is committed to a relationship with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples based on the principles of mutual trust, respect, reciprocity, and collaboration in the spirit of reconciliation.

**Course Description and Objectives:**

Interpersonal relations constitute the foundation of human societies. What does it mean to be a parent, a cousin, a spouse or a lover? Why do humans make kin out of strangers? Early anthropologists pointed out that units of analysis such as the family, kin, and descent provided scientific pathways to explaining the complexities and variations in familial relations and political organizations worldwide. Contemporary studies have argued that these units are not universal but are socially and historically constructed and supported by Western concepts. Since the 1960s, anthropologists have been rethinking kinship, asking new questions, and elaborating new theories to comprehend human relations. Undisputed categories of the past such as family, marriage, parent, and child are now regarded as historically and spatially variable, socially shaped and politically directed. Cross-cultural and feminist/critical analyses of kinship have also been capable of de-centering Western concepts of the nuclear family and their related gender and naturalistic biological assumptions.

In this course, we will discuss human relations in various cultures. We will explore the forms by which these relations contribute to the maintenance of society and how they are being influenced by recent social, cultural and technological changes.

The course is organized around lectures and class discussions. We will go through some of the conceptual ideas about a particular topic at the beginning of each class. Then we will expand discussions to explore such concepts and theoretical debates in the second half of the class. Discussions will form an essential part of the learning process and will revolve around current and

controversial issues in human relations. Student attendance and participation are crucial to achieving a satisfactory grade.

The successful students are expected at the end of the course to be able to:

- a) understand the basic concepts used in classical kinship studies;
- b) understand the limitations of the concepts proposed by early anthropologists and move towards more comprehensive interpretations;
- c) have the capacity to rethink some of their cultural assumptions and enhance their comprehension of social relations;
- d) reflect on how recent technological advancements in human reproduction and virtual forms of social interaction affect and redefine social connections and kinship roles.

### **Course Readings:**

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

### **Course Requirements and Grading:**

Graded assignments include the following:

*Class Participation*  
10% of course grade

*Film Assignment*  
10% of course grade

*Weekly Assignments*  
30% of course grade

*Mid-Term*  
20% of course grade

*Final Project*  
30% of course grade

***Class Participation:*** Reading (sometimes a lot) and attendance are critical to achieving 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 their own way) in class discussions and assignments. Students are allowed to have a maximum of two unjustified absences without penalty. Subsequent unjustified absences will result in the loss of 5 participation points for each absence, and five unjustified absences will result in failing this course.

***Weekly Assignments:*** During class sessions, students will bring a newspaper article or a clipping from other written media pieces accompanied by short reflections related to the readings assigned for that week. The short reflection paper should include a summary of the external piece and how it

correlates with the reading material and its main topics (suggested length – 400 to 600 words). Be prepared to discuss how your assignment relates to the current class readings. This assignment will help you connect with what you are learning in class and the world around you. This assignment will also help you construct your final paper as we will discuss how to analyze concepts critically and associate them with real-life examples. Students must upload their papers to the D2L folder before each class.

**Mid-Term:** The midterm comprises reflexive topics where students will write their answers connecting the reading material with practical examples. More details will be provided for this assignment.

**Final Project:** For this assignment, you will be asked to locate media coverage on one new technology that is redefining human relations. You can select a case that is being or has been presented in the media or a story covered in the past five years. You must use several forms of coverage about the same case so that you can compare your case study and apply concepts and discussions seen during the course. The comparison of the different representations is an important part of this assignment. The Final Project involves a presentation and a final document that follows the format of a research paper. Required length: 2000-3000 words or 5-8 pages, excluding bibliography. More details will be provided for this assignment.

### **Policies and Procedures:**

#### *Attendance:*

Students are expected to attend all classes and actively participate in discussions in order to earn a satisfactory grade.

#### *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 the evaluation include creative and critical insights and writing (clarity, coherence, and organization).

#### *General Course Policies:*

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity.

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, they will be asked to leave. If you have to leave early, inform the instructor at 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 another

person's work and turn it in as your own, even if you should have that person's permission. This is a 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 as hard copies (email attachments will not be accepted).

5. 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, published on Desire2Learn.

6. Lakehead University's email account is the primary communication tool between the instructor and students. Students are asked to check regularly (including before the class) their LakeheadU email 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 for a maximum period of two weeks after the assignment is delivered.

7. Students are welcome to schedule personal appointments to discuss any topic related to their academic progress or course content.

8. This syllabus is subject to minor changes during the course of the semester.

### **Course Schedule**

**Week 1:**                    **Introduction to the Course / Overview of Kinship Studies in Anthropology**

(Sept-7)

**Week 2:**                    **Introduction to Kinship Studies**

(Sept-14)                    - Nancy Bovillain: Cultural Anthropology (2005). (Chapter 8, Kinship and Descent)

- Nancy Bovillain: Cultural Anthropology (2005). (Chapter 9, Marriage and the Family)

**Week 3:**                    **Key Concepts in the Discipline**

(Sept-21)                    - Claude Levi-Strauss: The Elementary Structures of Kinship (1971). (Chapter 1: Nature and Culture; Chapter 2: The Problem of Incest; Chapter 4: Endogamy and Exogamy)

- Claude Levi-Strauss: The Elementary Structures of Kinship (1971). (Chapter 5: The Principle of Reciprocity; Chapter 8: Alliance and Descent; Chapter 9: The Marriage of Cousins)

**Week 4:**                    **Classical Approaches to Kinship Systems**

- (Sept-28)
- E. E. Evans-Pritchard: *The Nuer* (1940). (Chapter 4: The Political System)
  - Bronislaw Malinowski: *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922). (Chapter 3: The Essentials of the Kula)

**Week 5:**                    **Sociological Foundations of Reciprocity**

- (Oct-5)
- Marcel Mauss: "The Gift" (Introductory and Chapter 1)
  - Jacques T. Godbout & Allain Caillé. (1998). "Introduction: Does the Gift (Still) Exist"? In: *The World of the Gift*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

**Week 6:**                    **Reading Week**

(No Class: Thanksgiving & Study Week, Oct 10-14)

**Week 7:**                    **Discussion of the Final Projects and Midterm**

(Oct-19)

**Week 8:**                    **Indigenous Relations**

- (Oct-26)
- Leanne B Simpson. (2017). *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back* (Chapters 1 & 2). Winnipeg: Arp Books.
  - Harold Johnson. (2007). *Two families: treaties and government* (Chapter 5). Saskatoon: Purich Pub: 41-54.
  - Santos Granero. (2007). "Of fear and friendship: Amazonian sociality beyond kinship and affinity". In: *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 13: 1-18.

**Week 9:**                    **Family Beyond Blood Relatives**

- (Nov-2)
- Janet Carsten. (2004). "Introduction." In: *After Kinship*, 1-6.
  - Nancy Fisher. (2003). "Oedipus Wrecked? The Moral Boundaries of Incest". In: *Gender and Society*, 17(1): 92-110.
  - Kath Weston: *Families We Choose, Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (1991). (Chapter 3: Coming Out to Blood Relatives).

**Week 10:**                    **Film Assignment**

(Nov-9)

**Week 11:**                    **Love and Marriage**

(Nov-16)                    - Perveez Mody. (2002). "Love and the Law: Love-Marriage in Delhi". In: *Modern Asian Studies*, 36(1): 223-256.

- Kathryn Lloyd (2000). "Wives for Sale: The Modern International Mail-Order Bride Industry". In: *Northwestern Journal of International Law & Business*, 20(2): 341-368.

**Week 12:**                    **Kinship and Reproductive Technologies**

(Nov-23)                    - Morgan Clarke. (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.

- Marcia Inhorn. (2003). "The Worms Are Weak". Male Infertility and Patriarchal Paradoxes in Egypt". In: *Men and Masculinities*, 5(3): 236-256.

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

(Nov-30)

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**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 and the link to all other Desrise2Learn-based courses you are registered for.

**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 get in touch with Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible.