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### ANTH 101: Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

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# Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

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## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course introduces anthropological perspectives in analyzing the varied cultural settings of the contemporary world from peripheral non-western communities to large, industrialized countries such as the United States. It is designed to provide students with basic anthropological concepts and theories that will allow them to better understand other cultures on their terms. Investigating diverse facets of human experience such as family, religion, gender, politics, economics and art, and highlighting differences and similarities among us, a comparative study of different cultures addresses vital questions about what it means to be human. The ultimate goals of the course are to help students better relate to the culturally complex world and appreciate cultures different from their own.

\*This course fulfills the World Cultures and Global Issues requirement of the Pathways curriculum and the Analyzing Social Structures, World Cultures and Pre-Industrial Society requirements under the PLAS curriculum.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students will:

1. describe the unique approach of anthropology, including ethnography, cultural relativism, holism, fieldwork, and apply these concepts to specific examples;
2. evaluate cultural relativism with respect to examining and understanding cultures other than our own;
3. identify a particular society with its particular cultural elements such as communication, kinship, worldview, marriage, gender, economics, political structures, art and symbolic expression, ritual, and religion;
4. apply anthropological concepts to local, national, or global contexts to demonstrate an understanding of diverse human perspectives; and
5. reflect on your own cultural biases and enhance your understanding of, and appreciation for, human difference.

## REQUIRED LEARNING MATERIALS

### READINGS:

*Body Ritual among the Nacirema*, Horace Miner, *American Anthropologist* 1956, vol 58(3):503-507  
<https://www.sfu.ca/~palys/Miner-1956-BodyRitualAmongTheNacirema.pdf>

*Shakespeare in the Bush*, Natural History 1966, August-September  
<https://hdo.utexas.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Shakespeare-in-the-Bush.pdf>

*Eating Christmas in Kalahari*, Richard Lee, *Natural History*, December 1969.  
<http://people.morrisville.edu/~reymers/readings/ANTH101/EatingChristmas-Lee.pdf>

*Society and Sex Roles*, Ernestine Friedl, 1978 "Society and Sex Roles." *Human Nature*. 1:8–75.  
Reprinted in "Culture and Conflict" in 1979. J. Spradley and D. McCurdy, eds.  
<http://web.mnstate.edu/robertsb/380/Society%20and%20Sex%20Roles.pdf>

*Arranging a Marriage in India*, Serena Nanda, *Toward Truth: Anthropologists at Work*, edited by Philip R. Devita, 2000, pp. 196–204. Published by Waveland Press.  
<http://wserver.scc.losrios.edu/~anthro/garr/culturalanthro/CAChapter08MarriageFamilyKinship/india20.pdf>

*When Brothers Share a Wife: Among Tibetans, the good life relegates many women to spinsterhood*  
Melvyn C. Goldstein, *Natural History*, March 1987, pp. 39–48. © 1987 by the American Museum of Natural History.  
<https://faculty.sfcc.spokane.edu/lnetShare/AutoWebs/SarahMa/Goldstein%20-%20Polyandry.pdf>

*Baseball Magic*, George Gmelch, Revised version of "Superstition and Ritual in American Baseball" from *Elysian Fields Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1992, pp. 25-36. © September 2000, McGraw-Hill/Dushkin, [https://meissinger.com/uploads/3/4/9/1/34919185/gmelch\\_baseball\\_magic.pdf](https://meissinger.com/uploads/3/4/9/1/34919185/gmelch_baseball_magic.pdf)

### FILMS

\_(Watch via Queens College Library Streaming and Video Resources)\_

*Sworn Virgins*

<https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/sworn-virgins>.

*Strange Belief*

<https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/strange-beliefs-sir-edward-evans-pritchard-1902-1973>

*Between Two Worlds; Hmong Shaman in America*

<https://video.alexanderstreet.com/search?q=Between%20Two%20Worlds%20Hmong%20Shaman%20in%20America>

*Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response to Colonialism*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYZFNRC9mKk>

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADE

3 exams: 25% x 3: 75%  
Class participation and performance: 10%  
11 assignments and 2 mini projects: 15%

## YOUR MINI PROJECTS

### 1)Your Mini Project 1: Fieldwork of the Familiar

Your challenge is to do fieldwork in your own culture, find the strange in the familiar, and produce a compelling photo essay with 4 or 5 pictures that illustrate your insights. In doing so, you will transform some seemingly ordinary feature of your life into something that you recognize as contingent and open to new questions. Post a photo or photo essay on Instagram with the hashtags #cultanth101 #cultanth101challenge2 #yourgroup

### 2)Your Mini Project 2: Neighborhood Ethnography

Your challenge is to do at least one hour of fieldwork in your community and find a place (any physical space), people, activity, event, object, etc., that seems unique to your neighborhood and that many of your classmates would probably never otherwise experience. Share your sub-cultural reality through pictures and a thick description. Do “fieldwork” and write up a “thick description” of your experience. -A thick description is an exquisitely detailed description of the setting, participants, activities, interactions, and social dramas playing out that allow the reader to feel as if they are really there. Post a photo or photo essay on Instagram and share your thick description with the hashtags #cultanth101 #cultanth101challenge2 #yourgroup

### Getting Started with Instagram

1. To participate, just post to Instagram with the hashtag #cultanth101 + the hashtag of the challenge you are submitting (e.g. #cultanth101challenge1). If you are participating in a class that has a specific hashtag, you can add that as well.
2. If you would like more anonymity or if you would like to keep your main Instagram account separate, you can add a second Instagram account just for this class (a “Fake Insta” (“Finsta”) or as we like to call it, an “Anthsta”). Here are Instagram’s official instructions for adding a second account:
3. Go to your Instagram profile on your phone and tap the menu button in the top right. Scroll to the bottom and tap Add Account. Enter the username and password of the account you’d like to add.
4. To switch between accounts you’ve added: Go to your profile. Tap your username at the top of the screen. Tap the account you’d like to switch to

\* This work, Your Mini Projects, is a derivative of [“ANTH101: Anthropology for Everyone”](https://opened.cuny.edu/courses/anth101-free-textbook-and-hub-for-teaching-cultural-anthropology) by Michael Wesch, Ryan Klataske and Tom Woodward, Under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0.  
<https://opened.cuny.edu/courses/anth101-free-textbook-and-hub-for-teaching-cultural-anthropology>

Week	Topic	Material	Assignment
Week 1	Introduction		
Week 2	“Exotic” Culture	Read “ <i>Body Ritual among the Nacirema</i> ”	Pre-class Bb Assignment 1
Week 3	Cultural Relativism	Read “ <i>Shakespeare in the Bush</i> ”	Pre-class Bb Assignment 2
Week4	Fieldwork & Informants	Read “ <i>Eating Christmas in Kalahari</i> ”	Pre-class Bb Assignment 3
Week 5	<b>Review and the 1<sup>st</sup> Exam. No assignment</b>		
Week 6	Gender and Sex	In-class film viewing: “ <i>Sworn Virgins</i> ”	Mini Project 1: Fieldwork of the Familiar
Week7	Gendered Hierarchy	Read “ <i>Society and Sex Roles</i> ”	Pre-class Bb Assignment 4
Week8	Marriage Rules	Read “ <i>Arranging a Marriage in India</i> ”	Pre-class Bb Assignment 5
Week9	Marriage and Kinship	Read “ <i>When Brothers Share a Wife</i> ”	Pre-class Bb Assignment 6
Week10	<b>Review and the 2nd Exam, No assignment</b>		
Week11	Witchcraft	In-class film viewing: “ <i>Strange Belief</i> ”	Post-class Bb Assignment 7  Mini Project 2: Neighborhood Culture.
Week12	Magic in the U.S.	Read “ <i>Baseball Magic</i> ”  In-class film viewing: “ <i>Between Two Worlds; Hmong Shaman in America</i> ”	Pre-class Bb Assignment 8  Post—class Bb Assignment 9

Week13	Diviner Today	Read <i>"It Takes a Village Healer: Can Traditional Medicine Remedy Africa's AIDS Crisis?"</i>	Pre-class Bb Assignment 10
Week14	Magic and Colonialism	In-class film viewing: <i>"Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response to Colonialism"</i>	<b>Post</b> —class Bb Assignment 11
Week15	Review for the 3 <sup>rd</sup> exam. No assignment		