

ANTH103: Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology
Spring 2023 University of California, San Diego
Course: T/Th 3:30pm - 4:50pm, Center 105
Office hours: Fridays 10-12, sign up here: <http://bit.ly/2EqrUBn>

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“Consequently, most of us really exist at the mercy of other people’s formulations of what’s important.” June Jordan

“Does a mind seek to free itself from these norms of all thought? Society no longer considers this a human mind in the full sense, and treats it accordingly.” Emile Durkheim

“The quality of light by which we scrutinize our lives has direct bearing upon the product which we live, and upon the changes which we hope to bring about through those lives.” Audre Lorde

Course Description

Human beings live in connection. Our connections – with each other (family, friends, coworkers, strangers), with our environments, with other forms of life – make us who we are. How we use our bodies, who we think we are, how we think, how our communities, families, and other groups are composed – all of this comes about in and through our connections with things beyond us. These connections take on different patterns across history and across geography, and they shape the possibilities of what it means to be human.

This course is a critical inquiry into human connection. We will traverse sociocultural anthropology to explore prevalent techniques for understanding and transforming the connections that bind us together, shove us apart, and give shape to our lives. You will read exemplary theoretical and ethnographic texts, write papers, and conduct small research projects all with the aim of developing practical tools for understanding how connections give rise to similarity and difference, how power operates in and among groups, and how transformations – of our selves, of our relationships, and of the very nature of being human – happen.

We start off by looking at some of the foundational approaches to these questions and examine the use of conceptual tools like ‘function,’ ‘structure,’ and ‘culture.’ We then look at three particular topics of interest to anthropologists: exchange, language, and practice. We end the quarter reading an ethnography that draws together the questions of the course. As we make our way through all of this, we will pay particular attention to how anthropology helps us understand the distribution of power along such lines of difference as race, gender, sexuality, class, and ethnicity. The toolbox you develop should, ideally, be as much use out of the classroom as it is in. You will be constantly encouraged to relate our readings and discussions to your own lives.

Learning Objectives

1) Familiarity with foundational texts. Reading the foundational texts of a discipline is necessary to understand that discipline. Those texts serve as a guide, showing us what tools people have tried before: what those tools are, what they can do, and what they can’t do. The foremost objective of this course is to build an anthropological toolbox for you: for you to understand the

important schools of thought and practice in sociocultural anthropology, for you to be able to use these concepts in class and out, and, potentially, for you to craft your own tools.

2) Exploring the uses and limitations of that foundation. The relevance of a discipline’s foundation to current issues and to our lives depends in part on the questions we ask that foundation. In your methods exercises, you will be asked to give a “burning question” that helps guide how you do those exercises, and that helps you make the readings for the course relevant to the assignment and to your lives more generally. We will discuss the idea of a burning question more throughout class to help you develop the skill of developing research questions.

3) Critically examining the “conditions of possibility” of anthropology. Anthropology takes great pride in its attention to “non-Western” peoples. Yet our foundational texts are mostly “Western” and we use evidence from the “non-Western” to make statements about humans more generally. It is not a coincidence that the discipline of anthropology came into being at the same time the “West” started an ongoing military, economic, racial, religious, and cultural domination of the world. Yet there has been a tendency to act as if that world and that domination were irrelevant to our theories. The third objective of this course is to contextualize anthropology’s imagination within broader political and economic projects. Anthropology’s attention and imagination are shaped by the larger connections in which this discipline sits. We will frame the course with a critical examination of the conditions that make a practice of anthropology possible.

Assessing Your Learning Process

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|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Participation | 5% |
| Annotated Bibliographies | 20% (4 @ 5% each) |
| Methods Exercises | 30% (2 @ 15% each) |
| Midterm Exam | 20% |
| Final Exam | 25% |

PARTICIPATION (5%): Black feminist thinker bell hooks talks about using the classroom to create a **learning community**. This is a community dedicated to transforming everyone in it – teachers and students alike. It is a community that comes together to share new knowledge but also to transform behaviors, to challenge each other, to take risks, to express and address conflict, and to support each other. It is a community that takes trust and work. I ask you to think of your participation in this class in terms of commitment not simply to yourself but to a learning community.

A few principles for making a learning community:

Time and Effort – Participation includes lots of things.

- First, it includes attendance. Please attend! Second, participation includes preparation. A large portion of the work of this class will be doing careful readings of course material. Reading, and developing your annotated bibliographies (described below) will take a lot of effort from you, and everyone’s course experience will be richer for it. Do the readings ahead of time, do your annotated bibliographies, come with questions. Do the assignments, let them challenge you, enjoy them.

Courage and Generosity – Take responsibility for the learning community with courage and generosity. This means being aware of how many people have talked and allowing space for everyone to participate. Challenge yourself to talk less if you talk a lot, to talk

more if you are shy. Listen to what others say, try to understand where they are coming from.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES (20%): For four of the 17 sessions where we have material assigned, you will submit an annotated bibliography for one of the readings for that day. You must choose two days prior to the midterm and two days after. The annotated bibliographies are due on Canvas at 3:30pm the day of the class from which that reading is assigned. They will be graded: $\sqrt{+} = 95$; $\sqrt{=} = 87$; $\sqrt{-} = 80$.

Your annotated bibliography should be approximately two pages and consist of three parts:

- 1) a one-paragraph summary of the arguments of the piece
- 2) a one-paragraph of your critical reaction to the piece
- 3) three discussion questions

Please see annotated bibliography instruction sheet and examples for more information on what these exercises should look like.

METHODS EXERCISES (2 at 15% each): There are two methods exercises designed to give you a sense of what sociocultural anthropologists do. They are **due via Canvas by 3:30pm on 4/18 and 5/30**, to help you practice and reflect on different types of methodological skills and problems. Descriptions for each exercise are found below in the syllabus.

MIDTERM EXAM April 28th (20% of grade)

On **April 27th** there will be an in-class, oral exam that tests your understanding of fundamental concepts covered in the first portion of the course.

FINAL EXAM June 12th 3-5:50 (25% of grade)

At the scheduled time during finals week, there will be a final oral exam that tests your understanding of all concepts covered in the course.

Academic Honesty & Integrity

In general, I encourage working and discussing class material together. Whenever possible, talk to your classmates about what is going on in class: discuss the work we read, discuss your ethnography project, and discuss your ideas for your final paper. However, I do expect all of your writing to be your own; I expect you to work individually on the in-class exam. When you use the words and ideas of others in any written work you must identify direct quotations with quotation marks and indicate the source of ideas that are not your own, whether quoted directly or otherwise. As per UCSD policy, plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated:
<https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/>

Course Policies

Accommodations: An important part of your responsibilities as a student is to inform your instructors in a timely manner of any accommodations, scheduling conflicts, medical problems, or other emergencies that may affect your ability to complete your coursework.

Students requesting accommodations and services due to a disability for this course need to provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), prior to eligibility for requests. Receipt of AFAs in advance is necessary for appropriate planning for the provision of reasonable

accommodations. OSD Academic Liaisons also need to receive current AFAs. For more information, contact the OSD at (858) 534.4382 (V); (858) 534-9709 (TTY); osd@ucsd.edu, or <http://osd.ucsd.edu>.

Extension policy: Students may request **1 (and only 1)** extension on an assignment. You must make a request for an extension a MINIMUM of 24 hours before the paper deadline, and your request must be for a good reason and must include a proposed new deadline. ***Late papers which have not been granted an extension will be penalized 2.5% per calendar day they are late.***

Religious Holidays: Students who miss work for the purpose of religious observance are permitted to make up this work. Students should submit in writing to me by the end of the **second full week of classes** their documented religious holiday schedule for the semester.

Reading List

All readings are available as pdfs through the course Canvas site or electronically through the UCSD library. **Please be able to access the readings, along with your notes, during class.**

Schedule:

I. Introduction: Anthropological Need

1. Tues 4/4. Nature and Culture, a Cultural Divide.

- **Perec**, Georges. "Approaches to What" 177-178 (read editor's introduction after you have read the rest)

2. Thurs 4/6. Power Relations and the Practice of Anthropology.

- **Radiolab**. 2009. "New Normal?" mp3 online: <http://www.radiolab.org/story/91693-new-normal/>
- **Trouillot**, Michel-Rolph. 2003. "Anthropology and the Savage Slot" in *Global Transformations*. p7-28.

3. Tues 4/11. Ethnographic Refusal.

- **Simpson**, Audra. 2014. "Indigenous Interruptions" in *Mohawk Interruptus* p3-35. (Available online through UCSD library)
- **Rosa**, Jonathan and Yarimar **Bonilla**. 2017. "Deprovincializing Trump, Decolonizing Diversity, and Unsettling Anthropology." *American Ethnologist* 44(2):201-208.
- **Methods moment:**
 - **Bernard**, H. Russel. "Direct and Indirect Observation" in *Research Methods in Anthropology* 413-450.
 - **Bernard**, H. Russel. "Fieldnotes" in *Research Methods in Anthropology* 387-412.

Exercise 1: Observation, attunement, note-taking

With a partner (or two) from class, spend two hours observing (and participating) in a public or quasi-public site such as a shopping mall, a café, public transportation, a street corner or park, a party or concert, a meeting, or a library with particular attention to how interaction is structured. Keep field notes, in two ways: 1) for approximately one hour, observe in a manner that allows you to keep notes in real time; 2) for the other hour, participate without a notebook and write up your fieldnotes after the participant observation is completed (and at a different location). You may

include “first-level” fieldnotes that record direct observations/experiences as well as “second-level” fieldnotes that incorporate analysis of the scene/event/etc. You should have a fairly focused question in mind before you begin the research. Some possible themes one could explore in various sites include the negotiation of difference in shared spaces, sexuality and desire, the relation between commodities and identities, institutional authority, and/or the generation of geographies of security and fear. You are allowed to talk to people (but don’t resort to full-on interviewing – that’s for later).

Compare your notes with your partners.

Please post your field notes (scan your notebook entries rather than retype) and two single-spaced (12 pt) pages of report on the exercise that describes the location, your question, how you prepared, how you observed, what you observed, how your observations were similar to or different from your partners’.

Due via Canvas Tuesday 4/18 3:30pm

4. Thurs 4/13. Tools of the Discipline: Ethnography.

- **Malinowski**, Bronislaw. 1922. “The Subject, Method, and Scope of this Inquiry” and final portion of the conclusion in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. p1-25, 516-518.
- **Hurston**, Zora Neale. 1935. Introduction and chp 1 in *Mules and Men*. p3-20.
- **Narayan**, Kirin. “How Native is a ‘Native’ Anthropologist?” p671-686.

II. Tools of the Fathers: Function, Structure, Culture

5. Tues 4/18. Structural Functionalism: Organismic Analogy.

METHODS EXERCISE 1 DUE ON CANVAS BY 3:30pm

- **Durkheim**, Emile. 1897. “Introduction” in *Suicide*. p41-53.
- **Erikson**, Kai. 1966. “On the Sociology of Deviance” in *Wayward Puritans*. p3-29.

6. Thurs 4/20. Structures of Language.

- **Saussure**, Ferdinand de. 1916. Selections from *Course in General Linguistics* Baskin translator in one pdf: Intro Chp3: “The Object of Linguistics” **redline**; Part 1 Chp1: “Nature of the Linguistic Sign” **ALL**; Part 1 Chp3: “Static and Evolutionary Linguistics” **redline**; Part 2 Chp3, 4, 5, 6 **ALL**. p7-17 **redline**, 65-69 **ALL**, 79-100 **redline**, 111-129 **ALL**. about 25pages.

7. Tues 4/25. Structures of Culture.

- **Levi-Strauss**, Claude. 1955. “The Structural Study of Myth.” *The Journal of American Folklore*. Vol. 68, No. 270. p428-444.

8. Thurs 4/27. **MIDTERM EXAM in class.**

9. Tues 5/2. Exchange: Kula and Gifts.

Film Screening: *Mardi Gras: Made in China*

- **Malinowski**, Bronislaw. 1922. “Kula” in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. p81-105
- **Mauss**, Marcel. 1924. Introduction, part of Chp 1 in *The Gift*. p1-14.

10. Thurs 5/4. Patterns of Culture: American Cultural Anthropology.

- **Boas**, Franz. 1920. “The Methods of Ethnology.” p311-321.

- **Mead**, Margaret. 1935. Introduction, Chapters 2 and 3 in *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*. pv-xiv, p15-39.

11. Tues 5/9. Interpreting Culture: Symbols and Meaning.

- **Geertz**, Clifford. 1972. “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight.” p1-38.

III. Production, Exchange, Consumption.

12. Thurs 5/11. Modern Times: Enter Capitalism.

- **Marx**, Karl. 1848. “Bourgeois and Proletariat” in *The Communist Manifesto* in *The Marx-Engels Reader*. p473-485.
- **Dalla Costa**, Mariarosa and Selma **James**. 1973. “Women and the Subversion of Community.” p2-35.

13. Tue 5/16. Racial Capitalism, Intersectionality.

- **Mies**, Maria. 1997. “Colonization and Housewifization.” p74-111.

14. Thurs 5/18. The Power of Debt.

- **Debt Collective**. 2020. Introduction and “You are not a Loan” in *Can't Pay, Won't Pay*. p9-48.
- **Methods moment**:
 - **DeVault**, Marjorie and Glenda **Gross**. “Feminist Interviewing” 173-198.
 - **Bernard**, H. Russel. “Interviewing: Unstructured and Semistructured” in *Research Methods in Anthropology* 210-250 (skim as useful).

Exercise 2: Conduct an interview of 30-40 minutes with someone you do not already know well – on a topic such as the following:

- their autobiography
- the history of their family, community, town
- a (nontrivial) dispute in which they were involved
- an encounter with the police, state bureaucracy, or legal system
- the respondent's area of expertise

Record the interview, listen to the whole thing, transcribe a key 10-minute segment (do some poking around to evaluate transcription software and methods) and write up a brief report on the exercise, covering: (a) how you prepared; (b) what you found difficult about doing the interview; (c) what most surprised you about it; (d) what you would do differently if you did it again; (e) what kinds of knowledge you hoped would be produced and how that played out; (f) what the problems and benefits would be in deriving “ethnographic data” from your informant's answers to your questions; (g) where and how do you see ‘gender’ here. These notes should be no more than 2 single-spaced pages (12 pt) in addition to the transcription. Post them with the transcription. Review others for class discussion. Additionally, please identify a short segment of your interview that you would like to discuss with the class and be prepared to play the audio file in class (bring it on a laptop or phone).

Due via Canvas by Tuesday 5/30 3:30pm

IV. Language, Action, Domination

15. Tues 5/23. Language and Power.

- **Austin**, John L. 1955. Lectures 1, 2, 8 in *How to do things with Words*. 20pages.
- **Bourdieu**, Pierre. 1983. “Price Formation and the Anticipation of Profits” in *Language and Symbolic Power*. 23pages.

16. Thurs 5/25. Raciolinguistics.

- **Rosa**, Jonathan. 2019. "Introduction" in *Looking Like a Language, Sounding Like a Race*. p1-32. (Available online through UCSD library.)

V. Practice

17. Tues 5/30. Techniques and Habits.

METHODS EXERCISE 2 DUE ON CANVAS BY 3:30pm

- **Mauss**, Marcel. 1934. "Techniques of the Body." p50-68.
- **Foucault**, Michel. 1975. "The Examination" in *Discipline and Punish*. p184-194.

18. Thurs 6/1. Performative Identity.

- **Butler**, Judith. 1999. "Subjects of Sex / Gender / Desire" in *Gender Trouble* p1-13

VI. Economy, Language, and Practice at Work: Progressive Dystopia.

19. Tues 6/6.

- **Shange**, Savannah. 2019. *Progressive Dystopia*. (Available online through UCSD library.)

20. Thurs 6/8.

- **Shange**, Savannah. 2019. *Progressive Dystopia*.
- **Trouillot**, Michel-Rolph. 2003. "Making Sense: The Fields in which We Work" in *Global Transformations*. Palgrave Macmillan. p117-139.

UCSD's PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY

The University of California, San Diego is dedicated to learning, teaching, and serving society through education, research, and public service. Our international reputation for excellence is due in large part to the cooperative and entrepreneurial nature of the UCSD community. UCSD faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to be creative and are rewarded for individual as well as collaborative achievements.

To foster the best possible working and learning environment, UCSD strives to maintain a climate of fairness, cooperation, and professionalism. These principles of community are vital to the success of the University and the well being of its constituents. UCSD faculty, staff, and students are expected to practice these basic principles as individuals and in groups.

- We value each member of the UCSD community for his or her individual and unique talents, and applaud all efforts to enhance the quality of campus life. We recognize that each individual's effort is vital to achieving the goals of the University.
- We affirm each individual's right to dignity and strive to maintain a climate of justice marked by mutual respect for each other.
- We value the cultural diversity of UCSD because it enriches our lives and the University. We celebrate this diversity and support respect for all cultures, by both individuals and the University as a whole.
- We are a university that adapts responsibly to cultural differences among the faculty, staff, students, and community.
- We acknowledge that our society carries historical and divisive biases based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and political beliefs. Therefore, we seek to foster understanding and tolerance among individuals and groups, and we promote awareness through education and constructive strategies for resolving conflict.
- We reject acts of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, and political beliefs, and, we will confront and appropriately respond to such acts.
- We affirm the right to freedom of expression at UCSD. We promote open expression of our individuality and our diversity within the bounds of courtesy, sensitivity, confidentiality, and respect.
- We are committed to the highest standards of civility and decency toward all. We are committed to promoting and supporting a community where all people can work and learn together in an atmosphere free of abusive or demeaning treatment.
- We are committed to the enforcement of policies that promote the fulfillment of these principles.
- We represent diverse races, creeds, cultures, and social affiliations coming together for the good of the University and those communities we serve. By working together as members of the UCSD community, we can enhance the excellence of our institution.

Receipt of this syllabus constitutes an acknowledgment that you are responsible for understanding and acting in accordance with UCSD's principles of community.