

:: Introduction to Cultural Anthropology ::

Lauren Visconti
Faculty, Social Sciences
visconl@linnbenton.edu

Course Description:

Welcome to LBCC's Anthropology 103, Introduction to Cultural Anthropology. Anthropologists today research sites as varied as Wall Street investment banks, India's Supreme Court, cities in Nigeria, villages in Japan, Indonesian mining towns, Miami's night clubs, Occupy Wall Street, health clinics in Sweden, caves in Greece, oceanographic research ships, and San Francisco's Chinatown. Their methods often involve months or years of observing, participating in the communities they study - an approach that generates deep knowledge of the immense variety of human experience and ways of life.

Anthropology makes the strange familiar and the familiar strange. Why do we do the things we do? Throughout the course, you will be challenged to confront what you think is "normal" because the way you view the world is just one of many well-organized, equally sophisticated, and historically contingent approaches to life. Embrace this challenge and you may gain a better understanding of how you and others make sense of everyday life. Simply put, by exploring other cultures, you will better understand your own.

This course introduces students to key concepts, methods, theories, and approaches in cultural anthropology. It provides an opportunity for new analytical strategies and frameworks for understanding culture, power, language, politics, economics, inequality, race, class, gender, migration, health, and globalization. We all hold enormous assumptions about these topics and hardly tease these assumptions apart, assuming they are "natural" - and under closer scrutiny, we come to understand that they are complex cultural processes. Cultural anthropology helps provide the tools to test these assumptions so that we can better understand the contemporary world and actively engage our shared challenges.

Instructor Philosophy

One of my primary goals in teaching anthropology is to enable my students to develop appropriate tools to be able to engage and employ them both in and out of the classroom. As anthropologists we fully understand that the condition of being a human is that we have to understand the meaning of our experience. In the context of learning anthropology in the classroom, it is vital for students to viscerally learn to make their own interpretations rather than act on the purpose, beliefs, and judgments of others. Facilitating such an understanding is the pinnacle of my teaching philosophy. In other words, it is my

hope and expectation that this course will help you create your own ideas and opinions about cultural phenomenon, particularly about your own culture.

Take responsibility for your own learning and participating in class discussions is what makes this course enjoyable!

Learning Outcomes: Upon the successful completion of the course, student should be able to:

1. Articulate an understanding of culture as a dynamic and adaptive mechanism used by humans to live a life that would be impossible if totally dependent on nature, while also recognizing that new environmental pressures and stimulus are continually at play.
2. Apply anthropological theories, insights, and methods to contemporary situations students are likely to encounter in their professional and personal lives.
3. Use cultural anthropology to understand specific societal problems in a wide variety of areas, such as medicine, education, social relationship, government, architecture, business and economic development.
4. Develop a critical understanding of cultural diversity and its implications, ultimately enhancing sensitivity to other cultures.
5. Identify and analyze complex practices, values and beliefs and the culturally and historically defined meanings of difference.

Required Textbook:

Guest, K. J. (2017) *Cultural Anthropology: A Reader for a Global Age*. Norton Publishers

*This text is essential in order to succeed in this course.

Course Rules and Classroom Culture:

Student Conduct: The discipline of Anthropology requires us to explore the lives of others as well as our own. This means that certain topics can be sensitive at times and we have to act with the utmost respect for one another. The classroom, whether it be in person or online, must remain a safe space for us to explore our thoughts and learn. You will be expected to conduct yourself in an honest, professional, and ethical manner and held to a high standard.

Late Assignment Policy: Please complete your work on time. Each day an assignment is late, it will drop a letter grade. No assignments - outside of the final reflection (exam) - will be accepted past Week 10 of the term or March 15th, 2019.

Contact with your Instructor

I will always respond to your emails within 24 hours of you sending them. I teach four other classes in person so I spend a lot of time in the classroom and away from my computer. Come take an in person class!

Participation & Engagement

Participation and engagement facilitate learning in all environments and are central to an online course. You are expected to both participate and engage with your peers in this course as a part of your grade; however, I encourage you to take your learning into your own hands and push yourself a step further than what is required.

Statement on Academic Dishonesty: As a college student you will be held to the highest standards regarding academic integrity. Academic dishonesty includes: cheating (the intentional use of unauthorized materials, information, or study aids); fabrication (falsification or invention of any information); assisting (helping another commit an act of academic dishonesty); tampering (altering or interfering with evaluation instruments and documents); and plagiarism (intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another person as one's own). At the discretion of the instructor, engaging in academic dishonesty risks will absolutely result in a zero on the dishonest assignment and risks failing the entire course

Students with Disabilities: Accommodations are a collaborative effort between students, faculty, and staff. You should meet with your instructor during the first week of class if you have a documented disability and need accommodations. Your instructor needs to know this from you in order for you to best be accommodated. If you think you may need accommodation services please contact Center for Accessibility Resources (CFAR): 541-917-4789. <https://www.linnbenton.edu/cfar>

Course Requirements & Grades

Written Assignments

Written assignments are the backbone of this course. Focus on these. Reread what you wrote before submitting. Always write in complete sentences and be thorough. Reflection and relating the material to your life is always welcome as personalizing learning is critical to education. Your ethnographic interview is included here.

Midterm Exam

The midterm is open note, short answer and consists of ten in-depth questions.

Quiz

This is a quiz that will be based on the course material: text, lecture, and film.

Final Written Reflection

This is a summative reflection on your learning from the term. You will be asked to think about each modular theme from the term and reflect on what you learned.

Research Teaching Project

Do not think of this assignment as a presentation, approach it from the perspective of a teacher. You will be peer-evaluated and a rubric will be provided to you prior to the assignment.

Topics assigned:

- 1) Water Crisis in Flint, Michigan
- 2) Chemical Valley, Sarnia, Ontario Canada
- 3) Dakota Access Pipeline
- 4) Hurricane Harvey, Texas

You are responsible for teaching your group about your assigned site. Presentation should include, but is not limited to the following:

Brief history/map of the place.
Who lives there? Who doesn't?
What happened? Why did this happen? Did it "need" to?
Apply an Environmental Justice framework to your site
Discuss the public's response and resistance tactics.
Was there any resolution? If so, what did it look like?
How could this be avoided in the future?

Review Questions

These are the questions that are at the end of the readings. They will help you stay on track with your readings for the term.

Extra-credit Assignment (optional)

Warning! This is a four hour documentary so do not count on this! Search for the BBC Documentary entitled, *Century of Self* by Adam Curtis. It is broken into four parts so searching "Century of Self Part 1" on YouTube can be helpful. The extra credit assignment is to watch the whole documentary, taking

hand-written notes on points made that stuck out to you. Lastly, hand in a minimum one page essay reflecting on what you learned in the film and how it relates to your own life.