

# INTRO TO SOCIOCULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY & LINGUISTICS

ANTH 260-0101 | Tawes Fine Arts Building – 1100 | T/Th 11:00AM – 12:15PM

## INSTRUCTOR

Professor **Kevin Gibbons**

B0104 Taliaferro Hall (Zooarchaeology Lab)

T/Th: 1:00-4:00PM & F by appointment

[gibbonsk@umd.edu](mailto:gibbonsk@umd.edu)

## TEACHING ASSISTANT

**Julieta Ferrera**

0113B Woods Hall

M: 2:00-4:00PM T/Th: 2:00-3:30PM

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to key themes, theories, and practices of cultural anthropology: the study of human society and culture. In this course, we examine human society comparatively by looking at the diversity of the human experience. Exploring this diversity requires us to ask questions that interrogate our own understanding of the world, such as: How does power work? What binds people together and what leads to conflict? What creates social change? To understand how anthropologists have raised and addressed these questions, we investigate the characteristic research and writing method of the discipline: ethnography. Ethnography is a defining feature of cultural anthropology and a distinct way of understanding these big issues; and, ethnographic writing is an essential part of producing anthropological knowledge. We will ask what kinds of knowledge can be gained through long-term, immersive research with human communities and we will seek to understand the relationship between ethnographic method, social theory, and anthropological knowledge.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course will combine lectures with structured class discussions, readings, and films and asks students to engage with several key areas of inquiry. By the end of the semester, using examples encountered throughout the course, students should be able to:

- Use and explain the anthropological concept of *culture*
- Distinguish between human universals and culturally specific traits
- Apply cultural relativism to counter ethnocentrism and ethnic stereotyping
- Analyze sociocultural systems by dividing them into their subsystem components (economic, familial, ecological, religious, etc.)
- Apply the comparative approach to explain the reasons for cultural differences
- Identify and analyze the multilevel and shifting basis of ethnicity
- Employ ethnographic techniques to describe and analyze contemporary social systems

## REQUIRED READINGS

- *Perspectives: An Open Invitation to Cultural Anthropology*. *Perspectives* is an open access free textbook available digitally here <http://perspectives.americananthro.org/> and on Canvas.
- Articles and supplementary material available through Canvas.

**GRADING**

Reading Quizzes	20% (2% each)
Op-ed/Commentary	10%
Behavioral Observation Report	20%
Mid-Term Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%

**ASSIGNMENTS***Reading Quizzes (20%)*

While not strictly scheduled, reading quizzes will be undertaken in class roughly once per week. This will be a short exercise designed to assess your comprehension and critical understanding of the readings and films for the week. 12 quizzes will be given during the semester, which each worth 2% of your final grade. At the end of the semester, the lowest two scores will be dropped. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes with exceptions for religious observances and medical emergencies.

*Op-ed/Commentary (10%)*

One of the course goals is to strengthen your ability to understand the relevance of anthropology in informing and clarifying broader contemporary issues of our time (e.g., climate change, racism, police brutality, fascism, income inequality, homelessness). Op-eds and commentaries are fairly short opinion pieces (750-1000 words) that are intended to reach broad audiences and influence people within your community. You will be expected to compose an op-ed of publishable quality on a contemporary issue that is important and interesting to you. You can consult newspapers such as *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times* or other outlets for examples of excellent op-eds and commentaries. You should strive to make your op-ed pieces as polished and as close to publishable quality as possible. Further instructions and grading criteria for each step of the assignment are available on Canvas and will be discussed in class.

*Behavioral Observation Report (20%)*

For this activity, students will: 1) select a public space on or off campus; 2) spend 30 minutes observing how people behave in this environment; 3) make two list – behavior that is considered typical or ‘normal,’ and behavior that is considered atypical or ‘abnormal;’ 4) write down your ideas about the following questions: What behaviors appear to be culturally specific? What is considered ‘normal’ for that environment? What ‘abnormal’ behaviors did you observe? What might account for this behavior? Consider individual preferences, other cultural practices, financial reasons, etc. What, if anything, surprised you? Further instructions and grading criteria for each step of the assignment are available on Canvas and will be discussed in class.

*Mid-Term & Final Exams (25% each)*

There will be two exams that will cover the readings, lectures, and films discussed in class. These exams will be completed in class and may include key definitions, multiple choice, true/false, and short essay questions. Though not cumulative, the final exam will build on concepts encountered throughout the course and will ask you to make conceptual connections between the material.

## COURSE POLICIES

### *Classroom Conduct*

You are expected to conduct yourself in an adult and professional manner at all times. Please be courteous to your professor as well as your fellow students. During class discussion, please also be respectful of other students' opinions, especially if they disagree with your own. Do not engage in private conversations during lecture periods and make sure that all cell phones or personal communication devices are on silent mode. Do not bring food into the lecture room. You **MAY USE** electronic devices for taking notes during the lecture, but please do not text or use social media during class because it may be distracting to the other students or the professor. Be mindful that using computers to take notes, instead of pen and paper, has been proven to be less effective for your retention of information.

The uncertainty of life also often leads to sleep deprivation. This deprivation is occasionally unintentionally, and unfortunately, remedied by a 75-minute nap in a dark room to the white noise of some academic droning on about obscured patterns of cultural behavior. Try your best to stay awake, and I will try my best to keep your mind alert. I won't wake you up, unless you snore, but I can't guarantee we won't all be laughing at you as you drool on your desk.

### *Late Work and Missed Quizzes:*

All due dates are outlined in the schedule below. Assignments that are turned in late will be penalized 0.5 points per each day beyond the due date. Late assignments will *only* be accepted if discussed with me on or before the due date. Missed assignments and quizzes due to excusable causes (illness, family emergency, religious observances) can be made up without penalty. Please come to class even if your assignment is not ready to submit so that you do not fall behind.

### *Academic Integrity Code:*

The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. It is also your responsibility to learn how to properly attribute ideas to their sources. The Purdue Online Writing Lab has excellent resources to help you avoid inadvertent plagiarism: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/930/01/> All violations of the code of academic integrity will be referred to the Student Honor Council, and the standard sanction for a violation is severe. If you are found in violation you will not only fail the class, but the fact that you cheated will be marked on your transcript for one year (and you must petition to have it removed):

*Please note that the standard sanction for an undergraduate student shall be a grade of "XF" in the course. The normal sanction for a graduate student shall be dismissal (suspension or expulsion) from the University. Faculty/instructors may recommend a lesser or more severe sanction depending on the student's needs and circumstances of the incident. Generally, acts involving advance planning, falsification of papers, conspiring with others, or some actual or potential harm to other students will merit a severe sanction, i.e. suspension or expulsion, even for a first offense. An attempt to commit an act shall be punished to the same extent as the consummated act.*

The Student Honor Council proposed and the University Senate approved an Honor Pledge. The University of Maryland Honor Pledge reads:

*I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.*

This Pledge statement should be written and signed on the front cover of all papers, projects, or other academic assignments submitted for evaluation in this course. Students who fail to write and sign the Pledge will be asked to confer with the instructor. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit <http://www.shc.umd.edu>.

**Serious Note:** If you are struggling in the course, talk to Professor Gibbons ASAP. Do not wait until the end of the semester for help. By then, it is too late. If you do not do as well as you would like on the first assignments, come to Professor Gibbons' office hours (or make an appointment) so we can figure out how you can improve your performance in the course. Further, if you are struggling in any aspect of your college career, please find help as soon as possible, and I would be happy to be your first point of contact. As a student enrolled at a university, you have many resources available to you for free. College is exciting and world-expanding, but it also tends to correspond with the most psychological challenging period in our adult lives. You are not alone, there is help, and we care about both your academic and personal successes.

<b>Week 1</b> Jan. 28/30	Introduction to Anthropology & Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>P</i>: Ch. 1, 2</li> <li>▪ McCurdy, "Using Anthropology"</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2</b> Feb. 4/6	Ethnography, Fieldwork, & Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>P</i>: Ch. 3</li> <li>▪ Spradley, "Ethnography &amp; Culture"</li> <li>▪ Sterk, "Fieldwork on Prostitution in the Era of AIDS"</li> </ul>
<b>Week 3</b> Feb. 11/13	Ecology, Environment, & Subsistence The Anthropocene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>P</i>: Ch. 5</li> <li>▪ Lee, "The Hunters: Scarce Resources in the Kalahari"</li> <li>▪ Diamond, "Domestication &amp; the Evolution of Disease"</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4</b> Feb. 18/20	Economies & Exchange Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>P</i>: Ch. 6</li> <li>▪ Cronk, "Reciprocity &amp; the Power of Giving"</li> <li>▪ Bourgois, "Poverty at Work: Office Employment &amp; the Crack Alternative"</li> <li>▪ Weatherford, "Cocaine &amp; the Economic Deterioration of Bolivia"</li> </ul>
<b>Week 5</b> Feb. 25/27	Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>P</i>: Ch. 4</li> <li>▪ Bohannon, "Shakespeare in the Bush"</li> <li>▪ Deutscher, "Whorf Revisited: You Are What You Speak"</li> </ul>
<b>Week 6</b> Mar. 3/5	Reproduction & Kinship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>P</i>: Ch. 8</li> <li>▪ Scheper-Hughes, "Mother's Love: Death without Weeping"</li> <li>▪ McCurdy, "Family &amp; Kinship in Village India"</li> <li>▪ Goldstein, "Polyandry: When Brothers Take a Wife"</li> </ul>
<b>Week 7</b> Mar. 10/12	Race, Class, Caste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>P</i>: Ch. 9</li> <li>▪ Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?"</li> <li>▪ Fish, "Mixed Blood"</li> </ul>
<b>Mid-Term Exam: Thursday, March 12</b>		
<b>Spring Break</b>		
<b>Week 8</b> Mar. 24/26	Gender & Sexualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>P</i>: Ch. 10</li> <li>▪ Tannen, "Conversation Style: Talking on the Job"</li> <li>▪ Wolf, "Uterine Families &amp; the Women's Community"</li> </ul>
<b>Op-ed/Commentary: DUE Friday, March 27 by 11:59 PM</b>		
<b>Week 9</b> Mar.31/Apr.2	Politics & Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>P</i>: Ch. 7</li> <li>▪ Sutherland, "Cross-Cultural Law: The Case of the Gypsy Offender"</li> <li>▪ Harris, "Life without Chiefs"</li> </ul>
<b>Week 10</b> Apr. 7/9	Religion & Magic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>P</i>: Ch. 11</li> <li>▪ Freed &amp; Freed, "Taraka's Ghost"</li> <li>▪ Gmelch, "Baseball Magic"</li> </ul>
<b>Week 11</b> Apr. 14/16	Performance Medical Anthropology & the Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>P</i>: Ch. 14, 16</li> <li>▪ Miner, "Body Ritual among the Nacirema"</li> </ul>

<b><i>Behavioral Observation: DUE Friday, April 17 by 11:59 PM</i></b>		
<b>Week 12</b> Apr. 21/23	Anthropology of Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reed, "Forest Development the Indian Way"</li> <li>▪ Alverson, "Advice for Developers: Peace Corps Problems in Botswana"</li> </ul>
<b>Week 13</b> Apr. 28/30	Globalization & Transnationalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>P</i>: Ch. 12, 13</li> <li>▪ Bestor, "How Sushi Went Global"</li> <li>▪ Shandy, "The Road to Refugee Resettlement"</li> <li>▪ Ehrenreich &amp; Hochschild, "Global Women in the New Economy"</li> </ul>
<b>Week 14</b> May 5/7	Public Engagements & Applied Anthropology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>P</i>: Ch. 17, 18</li> <li>▪ Stryker, "Public Interest Ethnography"</li> <li>▪ Omohundro, "Career Advice for Anthropology Undergraduates"</li> </ul>
<b>Week 15</b> May 12	Catch-up/Exam Review	
<b><i>Final Exam: Thursday, May 14 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM</i></b>		