

:: Anthropology 210 (CRN 31384): Comparative Cultures – 3 credits ::

Jamie Petts
Instructor, Social Sciences
Email: jamie.petts@linnbenton.edu

Class: Tue & Th 1:30-2:50 pm
Benton Center Room 209
Office hours: T/Th 2:50-3:50 pm

Course Description

Examines the ethnographic process anthropologists use to study other cultures, the process of comparing two or more cultures in an ethnologic context, and the development of cultures over time to be what they are today. Introduces a methodology for engaging in culturally relative dialogue is introduced and then emphasized in all learning activities. Recommended: College-level reading and writing skills.

Welcome to Anthropology 210. This course introduces students to comparatively study human beings, societies, and cultures. This course provides students with an overview of cultural anthropology and its ways of understanding people. The course material explores the diversity of human cultures and takes a close look into a varied number of human communities in order to understand how they work, how they are different from others, and the forces that shape their worldviews.

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.

Learning Outcomes:

- Explore and describe historical and environmental influences on other cultures.
- Describe similarities and differences between cultures and apply the anthropological approach of cultural relativism.

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 your own culture.

One of the foundational methodologies used in my classroom is focusing on each student’s needs, abilities, interests, and learning styles placing the instructor as a facilitator of learning, acknowledging that the student voice is central to the learning experience. The benefits of this approach strengthens student motivation, promotes peer communication, builds student-teacher relationships, and engages in learning as an active process, while simultaneously fostering each student to *take responsibility for their own learning*.

Course Goals:

~ Students will learn to see human cultures – whether in texts, religious rituals, or political or economic behavior from an anthropological perspective. These insights can be applied both to cultures separated from students’ own cultures by time or space as well as their own cultures.

~ Students will learn to recognize that cultures exist in time and space and are unique to that time and that space. Cultures are distinctive and understanding them requires accepting and negotiating otherness.

~ Students will understand that politics is intrinsically cultural and culture intrinsically political.

~ Students will appreciate the influence of the environment in enabling and constraining social life.

~ Students will have the opportunity to conduct an ethnographic project.

Required Textbooks:

We have two required books for this course; however, you will only need to purchase one! You are welcome!

You will need to buy the following ethnography:

- Checker, M. (2005). *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town*. New York University Press

The next textbook is required, but it is provided to you for free on our Canvas site as an E-book. Please download the book on your computer and save it. Saving it will allow you to use the search bar at the top to help you navigate the text more efficiently. In your course overview this book is referred to as CC.

- **Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology, 14th Edition** By James W. Spradley, David W. McCurdy, Dianna Shandy

You must use your LBCC email to be in this course. In your email, you will find a message inviting you to our course on Canvas. Please sign up as soon as you receive the email. The only issues with the log in that I have come across in years is when students misplace their password, so be mindful about the password.

Additional Readings:

All readings that are not found in our textbooks will be posted to our class's Canvas page.

*You will need to do the posted readings and have a copy of this textbook to succeed in this course.

*Readings need to be completed *by the day of the class that they are listed on the course schedule.*

Course Expectations 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 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.

Laptops have been consistently proven to be a distraction in class for the students using them, other students, and the instructor. Use of a laptop or other technological device are **not** permitted in class without the prior consent of the instructor. The only exception to this is when we do small group work or partner work. You are welcome to refer to the E-book on your laptop during those times.

Late Assignment Policy: Please complete your work on time. Each day an assignment is late, it will drop a letter grade.

Absences: Attending all classes is correlated to student success. Attendance will be taken each week. If you know you will be absent, communicate with your instructor prior to the absence and arrangements will be made. If you have an unexpected absence, please follow along with the class on the syllabus, contacting your instructor if you have any questions. **In-class writings cannot be made up.**

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:

LBCC is committed to inclusiveness and equal access to higher education. If you have approved accommodations through the Center for Accessibility Resources (CFAR) and would like to use your accommodations in the class, please talk to your instructor as soon as possible to discuss your needs. If you believe you may need accommodations but are not yet registered with CFAR, please visit the CFAR Website (<https://www.linnbenton.edu/cfar>) for steps on how to apply for services or call 541-917-4789.

Course Requirements & Grades:

***This class requires doing the course readings that are assigned. You need to set aside time each week, prior to class, to do the readings in order to be successful in this class.**

Writing Assignments (20 points)

These writing assignments will include reflective writing, quizzes, group quizzes, and partner work covering material from the assigned reading for that week. They may take place both in-class and out of class. For in-class writings, you will never be graded on organization, spelling, grammar, etc. This is an opportunity for you to expand on the readings and explore what flows out of your head and onto the paper.

Concept Journal (15 points)

In this course you will keep a concept journal - a journal that is kind of like a vocabulary journal. Throughout the class, I will mention the journal and we will add new key terms to it. Your concept journal follows two steps: a) definition and b) a short explanation of how you relate this word to your own life and *provide context* for the term. You can staple pieces of paper together to create a journal or use a small notebook - whatever works for you. A minimum of 20 concepts is required, but you are welcome to do more.

Here is an example: let's imagine in class the word "ethnocentrism" comes up in the lecture or text. This is not a word that is typically used in everyday conversation, yet is common in the social sciences.

a) Ethnocentrism (noun) or Ethnocentric (adjective)

1. the belief in the inherent superiority of one's own ethnic group or culture
2. a tendency to view alien groups or cultures from the perspective of one's own
3. belief in the intrinsic superiority of the nation, culture, or group to which one belongs, often accompanied by feelings of dislike for other groups

b) I have a friend who sees things ethnocentrically. He often makes large generalizations about groups of people that are misinformed. He always talks about his "African neighbor" who makes a lot of noise upstairs as if all people from there are loud. It is ethnocentric to think of a group of people as one stereotype. Africa is a diverse continent with 57 different countries, but Americans too often make that ethnocentric mistake. The context for ethnocentrism is believing that your culture is superior to others shows someone's lack of willingness or lack of imagination for being able to see things from a different perspective.

Class Participation (20 points) -

You will be given ample opportunity to participate. Participation does not only mean speaking up in class. In fact, when the same person speaks all the time it hampers the ability of others to participate. Participation is about engagement.

There are many ways to engage with the material. One such way is speaking up in class and another way is being a solid group member. Participate in small group work, be attentive in lectures. Be a good partner when we do group work. Your attendance will be reflected in your participation grade, as will your short in-class oral presentation.

Ethnographic Interview (10 points)

You will find a person over the age of sixty to interview. There will be a separate handout explaining this assignment in detail. You will have to turn in three parts for this assignment: 1) fieldnotes 2) typed transcript and 3) an analysis/reflection of the experience.

Midterm (15 points) – In class

The midterm will be based on your concept journal plus short answer questions.

Final Essay Exam (10 points) - Take home

The final exam in the class will be a summation of what you have learned in the course. It will be handed out in class on **Tuesday, March 10** and will be due in class on **Thursday, March 12**.

Field Research Project (10 points)

This project requires you completing a Field Research Project of visiting one site of worship other than your own, during this term. A project protocol and guidelines for performing research will be available on the Canvas site. The assignment is to attend a religious service of a tradition other than your own, to fill out the project template, and to type a 500-word analysis of your experience reflecting on how it challenged and/or affirmed your perspective on religion, doing a ritual analysis, examining symbols, and providing an analysis of how your own ethnocentrism, naïve realism, and other anthropological concepts are involved in this experience. The project template and written analysis are both due in class on **Tuesday, March 10**. You will present a short oral report of your experience, in class, on either **March 10 or March 12** and will be part of your class participation grade.

Extra-credit Assignment (optional) - (5 points) -

Warning! This is a four-hour documentary so do not count on this! This is designed to help in the case of a borderline grade, not as a replacement for assigned work. 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. You will turn in your hand-written notes along with a minimum one page essay (typed) reflecting on what you learned in the film and how it relates to your own life.

Your grade can be cleanly calculated out of 100 points.

| Total Points | Final Grade |
|--------------|-------------|
| 100-90 | A |
| 89-80 | B |
| 79-70 | C |
| 69-50 | D |
| 50 and below | F |

***See Course Overview for topics, schedule of readings, and all due dates for assignments**