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ANTH 220.01: Comparative Social Organization

John Norvell

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Anthropology 220
Comparative Social Organization

Fall 2001
TR 8:10 - 9:30

North Underground Lecture Hall

Instructor: Dr. John Norvell
Office: Social Sciences 222
Email: norvell@selway.umt.edu
Telephone: 243-4106
Office hours: T 10-11, W 2-3, or
by appointment

TA: Terry Godin
TA: Terry Godin
Office: SS 219
Telephone: 243-5865
Office hours: MW 1-3, TTh 9:30-
12:00

TA: Erin Cunniff
TA: Erin Cunniff
Office: SS 238
Email: erincunnif@aol.com
Telephone: 243-5865
Office hours: T 10-12

Objectives: This course will provide students with an in-depth introduction to sociocultural anthropology, with an emphasis on social organization. We will look at variations in family and kinship, economic and political organization, religious beliefs and practices, social hierarchies and stratification. We will also pay attention to the ways that anthropologists study and interpret cultural diversity. Cases and examples will come from the non-Western world and the West. There are no prerequisites. The course is required for anthropology majors and minors and fulfills the social science distribution requirement. The course will be lecture-based, with frequent class discussions of films and readings.

Reading: There are three books that you will be asked to purchase for this course:

- *Other People's Worlds*, Joy Hendry (a concise textbook of sociocultural anthropology)

- *Conformity and Conflict*, Spradley and McCurdy (a reader)

- *Never in Anger*, Jean Briggs (an ethnography of an Eskimo family)

In addition, there is one required article in PDF format available for [download](#) or on-line reading on the course web site: "From the Native's Point of View," by Clifford Geertz. You need the free [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#) to view this document.

The assigned reading for each week is listed below. I will fine-tune the reading schedule in class so that lectures follow reading for maximum effect. If you put off the week's reading, you will get less out of both lectures and reading, so stay on top of it. The reading is not heavy, but it will pile up if you get behind. Films will also be scheduled throughout the semester.

Grades: Your grade will be based on three exams--two midterms and a final--and one short paper. These four grades will be weighted equally (25% each) for your final grade. Exams will cover lecture material and the reading, not all of which will be directly addressed in class. Make sure you ask the TA or me about anything you don't understand in the reading. Half the final will cover the final three weeks of the course; the other half will be cumulative from the first twelve weeks. The exams will consist of short-answer questions that will give you maximal opportunity to show us what you have learned and minimal opportunity to b.s. us or guess. Grades will be assigned on the following ten-point scale: 91-100=A; 81-90=B; 71-80=C; 61-70=D; < 61=F. Make-ups for the midterms are possible; you must speak to me one week before the midterm to be allowed to take a make-up, except for a genuine, University-approved emergency, in which case you must talk to me as soon as possible after your absence. (Oversleeping is not an emergency.) Make-ups are harder, with fewer choices, possibly essay questions. There will be no make-up for the final exam. If you cannot attend the final for an extremely good, urgent reason, I will give you an incomplete and an alternate assignment to be completed soon after the semester's end. Don't be late to exams: No one will be admitted for the exams after the first ten minutes of the exam period.

The paper assignment will be an analytical or critical essay on *Never in Anger* that addresses some issue or set of issues from the course that interests you. See the [paper assignment description](#) for detailed information. We will talk about this paper in more detail in class. It will be approximately five well-written pages. Late papers will be accepted and graded down according to the following schedule, **no exceptions:** You will lose 5% (half a grade) for each day the paper is late. Emergencies happen--printers break, family emergencies happen, illness strikes, etc.--and

if you haven't put the paper off until the last night, they will have less negative impact on your grade. If you do not already have one, I recommend the purchase of a college writing manual to help you with process, organization, grammar, and style. An excellent and affordable one is *A Writer's Reference*, by Diane Hacker, but there are many others (from Harcourt Brace, Little Brown, etc.). Buy one that will serve you well throughout your college career. Spelling counts, for many reasons, and there is no excuse for misspelling an important word from the ethnography (including Eskimo words) or the course lectures or reading. Click [here](#) for a generic description of A, B, C, D and F papers.

Extra credit option: Contrary to my usual policy, this semester I am offering an extra credit option to encourage participation in an exciting new anthropology journal project called the AA Archive Project. This fall undergraduate students from forty universities in the US and Canada will be writing short (approx. 300-350 words) summaries of every article that has appeared in *American Anthropologist*, the flagship journal of the American Anthropological Association. The summaries will be published under your name in a new on-line journal entitled *Public Anthropology*. You must choose two articles and commit to write the summaries by Oct. 1 and submit them by Nov. 1. To get the credit (an additional 3 percentage points tacked onto your final grade average--enough to put a upper C range grade into the B range, etc.!) your summaries must be on time, conform exactly to the publication specifications, and be acceptable in terms of clarity, grammar, and spelling. It's an all-or-nothing proposition. I reserve the right to return a summary to you for rewriting as many times as it takes to achieve this. I encourage even those of you who normally would not worry about extra credit to do this, for your personal place in history and the glory of your school, etc., etc. See the [AA Archive page](#) for detailed information and instructions.

Communication: There will be a web site for this course which will contain this document and a page to list any announcements or schedule changes given in class. It will also include copies of handouts, review sheets, and overheads. The URL for this site is <http://www.anthro.umt.edu/notes/220>. Please do not hesitate to see the TA or me for help. You may sign up for a slot during posted hours or contact us to schedule an appointment at some other time if your schedule absolutely requires it.

Bummers: On a negative note, academic misconduct (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) will be dealt with strictly and in accordance with the guidelines in *The Student Conduct Guide*, with which you should be familiar. See the following web site for some good examples and discussion of plagiarism do's and don't's: <http://www.csubak.edu/ssric/modules/other/plagiarism.htm>.

There is no official penalty for missing class, other than the predictable effect on your grade. If you have missed a lot of classes, don't expect that the TA or I will re-teach what you have missed. Moreover, you will be occasionally engaged in group work, sometimes without prior notice, and there is no way to make up the understanding gained in such class sessions.

I expect enthusiastic participation in class when requested and full respect for the rights of your fellow students to express their opinions and to learn unencumbered by harassment or disruption. Lack of this respect will lead to your being asked to leave the class. If repeated, you may be kicked out and given a failing grade. This year I single out one issue for particular notice: If your cell phone rings during class because you have forgotten to turn it off and you make a spectacular leap to turn it off immediately, you will be forgiven **once**. If you answer it in class or let it ring ever again, prepare to find something else to fill the time slot of the course, because you won't be coming back.

Schedule (subject to change, see the web for the most up-to-date version):

Week One (9/4 - 9/6) Introduction to the course, sociocultural anthropology amongst the disciplines

Reading: Hendry 1-16, C&C 2-17

Week Two (9/11 - 9/13) The nature of anthropological knowledge: culture & fieldwork

Reading: Hendry 17 - 46, C&C Reading 1 (Spradley) and 3 (Bohannon)

Week Three (9/18 - 9/20) Culture as a symbolic system

Reading: Hendry 65 - 96, C&C reading 7 (Thomson), [Geertz \(course web site\)](#)

Week Four (9/25 - 9/27) Religious beliefs and practices

Reading: Hendry 115 - 142, C&C 311 - 314, C&C readings 29 (Freed & Freed) and 30 (Gmelch)

Week Five (10/2 - 10/4)

Reading: C&C readings 31 (Barkun) and 32 (Leavitt)

Week Six (10/9 - 10/11)

First midterm exam, Tuesday 10/9

Week Seven (10/16 - 10/18) Family, kinship, and marriage

Reading: Hendry 181 - 206, C&C 191 - 193, C&C readings 18 (McCurdy) and 19 (Goldstein)

Week Eight (10/23 - 10/25)

Reading: C&C readings 17 (Scheper-Hughes) and 20 (Wolf)

Week Nine (10/30 - 11/1) Ecology and subsistence

Reading: C&C 99 - 102, C&C readings 9 (Lee) and 11 (Reed)

Week Ten (11/6 - 11/8) Economic systems

Reading: Hendry 47 - 64, 207 - 224, C&C 153-155

Week Eleven (11/13 - 11/15)

Reading: C&C readings 13 (Cronk), 16 (Nietschmann), and 15 (Bourgeois)

Week Twelve (11/20, no class 11/22 for Thanksgiving holiday)

Second Midterm Exam, Tuesday 11/20

Week Thirteen (11/27 - 11/29) Political organization

Reading: Hendry 148 - 180, C&C 271-273, C&C readings 27 (Eames) and 28 (Chance)

Week Fourteen (12/4 - 12/6) Social inequality: race, class, gender

Reading: C&C 229 - 231, C&C readings 22 (Friedl), 23 (Fish), and 24 (Weatherford)

Week Fifteen (12/11 - 12/13) Social change and world systems

*Reading: C&C readings 33 (Weatherford) and 34 (Turner) **Paper is due in class Tuesday 12/11.***

Final Exam: Monday, December 17, 10:10 - 12:10

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