INTRODUCTION

Anthropology is the study of humanity, past and present, but it is more than just an academic discipline. Anthropology is an enterprise of infinitely rich potential, a frame of reference for encountering and making sense of the world. To live within an anthropological perspective is to perpetually wonder how cultural practices and beliefs came to be the way they are, to be forever curious about the meanings, benefits and consequences of those customs, and to ask what alternatives exist (or could be created), in what contexts, under what circumstances.

Anthropology reveals the illusory nature of “facts” that we claim justify our divisions from each other. An anthropological way of thinking understands that there is no such thing as an “exotic” “Other” – or perhaps there is, and it’s us.

To put it more simply, anthropology has a basic question and a basic mission. The question: “What are the rules?” The mission: to make it safe to be different (though “different” should be in quotes, since the very definition of difference is culturally relative…but I’m getting ahead of myself. We’ll wade into those waters in a few weeks).

The question is pursued and the mission honored with a three-part methodology. Anthropologists do fieldwork, meaning they strive to immerse themselves as fully as possible for an extended time within the worldview and customs of a people about whom they want to learn. Insights and analysis that comes from fieldwork are conveyed through a genre of writing called ethnography. Ethnographies used to be limited to academic books and articles, but now ethnographic “texts” are found in all manner of media. The third element of anthropological method is basic and continual research, which happens before, during, and after fieldwork, through as full a range of materials and disciplinary considerations as possible.

By the end of the semester you will be familiar with some of anthropology’s foundational arguments, you will have carried out your own fieldwork, you will have at least a slightly more nuanced understanding of the social lives that surround you and in which you are immersed, and you will see how anthropology can be simultaneously a liberating perspective and a practical training.

REQUIREMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS

You will write a fieldwork proposal, one response paper, and a fieldwork overview/ethnography. You will also write questions for your discussion sections each week. In addition, you will create a kinship chart and take two in-class exams (a mid-term and a final).
Weekly Questions
Write and post three questions each week (posting instructions are in the next paragraph). The questions must engage that week’s readings. Use the texts! The purpose of this exercise is to show me you’ve actually read them, and to show me where the reading and/or the lecture is unclear. If you don’t understand something we’ve read even after we’ve gone over it in class, that should be at least one (and perhaps all) of your questions. Another approach is to imagine you’ve been asked to write parts of the mid-term or final. What can you draw from the reading that you can turn into a substantive question?

To post your questions, go to the Assignments tab on our NYU Classes portal, find your discussion section, and put them there. Your questions must be posted no later than 5:00p on Wednesdays. Late questions won’t be accepted. “Late” means after 5:00 on Wednesdays – even just a few minutes after 5:00. Missed questions will be calculated as zero in that component of your grade.

Response paper
This should be between 500 and 1250 words – that is, between two and five pages, double spaced. Hand-written work will not be accepted. The paper must engage at least two of the readings from class as they help you analyze and/or critique a museum space and exhibition. Two readings is the minimum; using more than two reflects a greater effort on your part and therefore the likelihood of a better grade. Rubrics and guidelines for the writing assignments are under the Resources section of our NYU Classes site.

Museum Details
Museums are good places to observe how cultural symbols are defined, organized, and narrated. Choose a museum from this list and visit it at least once. Choose a specific exhibition within it and consider what it’s telling visitors. What underlying “rules” does it follow or break? If you were an anthropologist from a distant and very different place, how would you describe it to people in your native land?


If you want to visit a museum not on this list, convince me.

Fieldwork Project
Choose a social setting in which to do anthropological participant observation. Write an initial proposal for the project and then a final report. We’ll go over this in detail during class and in your discussion sections; guidelines are on our NYU Classes portal.

Grade Percentages
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<tr>
<td>Section participation</td>
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<td>Fieldwork proposal</td>
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<td>Mid-term exam</td>
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<td>Response paper</td>
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<td>Fieldwork report</td>
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<td>Weekly questions</td>
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The Stern Warning
Late assignments will not be accepted, and there are no make-up exams. Exceptions will be considered only if they are made by your faculty advisor, by someone from the dean’s office, or if you have documentation supporting a legitimate reason (i.e., a doctor’s note, proof of death in the family, etc.).

POSSIBLE EXCURSIONS
If there’s interest, we may take a class trip to Dead Horse Bay in Brooklyn, and/or enjoy an evening on the town with local Freegans. The Dead Horse Bay trip will be on a weekend, perhaps very early in the day (it depends on the tides). An outing with the Freegans will be around 9:00 on a week night. These are entirely voluntary, and both will likely have space limitations.

CONDUCT
Arrive to class and discussion section on time. Respect your classmates and your teachers by being attentive and by participating in class and section conversations.

In your writing, you must give credit to the source of any and all material you quote directly or use indirectly. Plagiarism is a crime punishable by failing the class.

Using iDevices in class is a distraction to your classmates. If you are unable to disconnect for 75 minutes, please sit in the designated area we’re calling the Northwest Quadrant.

SCHEDULE
Week 1 | Getting started
January 26
Why anthropology? What are our expectations of you? What are your expectations of the class? What are your expectations of yourself?

January 28


Week 2 | How to think like an anthropologist…or how not to
February 2

February 4

Week 3 | Ancestors & Method
February 9


**February 11**


→ Post three questions to your discussion section by 5:00pm (look under Assignments). See the top of page 2 for guidelines.

→ Fieldwork proposal due

**Week 4 | It’s all in the family**

February 16 [Presidents Day – No Class] & 18


Read the AusAnthro website on kinship, parts 2, 3, & 4:
http://www.ausanthrop.net/research/kinship/index.php

→ Post three questions to your discussion section by 5:00pm
→ Bring a rough draft of your kinship chart.

**Week 5**

February 23 & 25


Watch the documentary “Paris is Burning.”

→ Monday: Final kinship chart due
→ Post three questions to your discussion section by 5:00pm
**Week 6 | The Gift of Exchange**

**March 2**


**March 4**


⇒ *Post three questions to your discussion section by 5:00pm*

**Week 7 | Stuff and Thingness, a.k.a. Material Culture**

**March 9**


**March 11-- Mid-term exam**

**Week 8 | Spring Break**

**Week 9 | Infrastructural and Urban Forms**

**March 23**


**March 25**

In-class film screening: documentary about the Freegans by Tate LeFevre

⇒ *Post three questions to your discussion section by 5:00pm*
Week 10 | “Race” and Protest

March 30


April 1


→ Post three questions to your discussion section by 5:00pm
→ Museum response paper due

Weeks 11 & 12 | Digital Redefinitions?

April 6


April 8

→ Post three questions to your discussion section by 5:00pm

April 13 & 15
Monday / Coleman, continued: Part II (Chapters 3 & 4)
Wednesday / Coleman, continued: Part III (Chapter 5, Conclusion, Epilogue)

→ Post three questions to your discussion section by 5:00pm

Weeks 13 & 14 | For, Of, or With? Public/Applied Anthropology

April 20

April 22

In-class film screening: The Men of CU-160

➔ *Post three questions to your discussion section by 5:00pm*

April 27 & 29
Monday / Nagle, continued: Part III (Chapters 7-10), Part IV (Chapters 11-14).
Wednesday / Nagle, continued: Part V (Chapters 15-19), Postlude, Glossary.

Week 15 | The End of the Beginning
May 4 & 6 - Catch up, conclusion, loose ends, exam review, where to go from here

➔ *Fieldwork overview / ethnography due on Wednesday*

Week 15.5
May 11 - Final Exam