Introduction to Anthropology
Syllabus
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REQUIRED READING


COURSE CONTENT:

Unit 1: Introduction to Anthropology

Objective: to introduce the discipline of anthropology and the specializations within anthropology. Students will begin to understand the overall purpose of anthropology and how it helps us to better understand ourselves and others.

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- define anthropology and discuss how it differs from other social sciences;
- identify the major specializations within anthropology and explain their goals;
- explain the key concepts and issues of concern to anthropologists;
- identify the major approaches/perspectives used in anthropology and discuss their influence on ethnographic research; in particular, critically assess the value of cultural relativism in anthropology and everyday life;
- discuss the value and relevance of anthropology.


Addresses:
- key terms and concepts used in anthropology;
- approaches used in anthropological research, their efficacy and challenges;
- relevance of anthropology as a discipline.

Unit 2: Anthropological Methods and Approaches

Objective: to introduce the research methods that are fundamental to anthropological research.

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- critically discuss the nature of fieldwork and its challenges, including ethical dilemmas;
• identify new directions in ethnographic research, including the concept of field and virtual community;
• identify field research methods, and discuss their significance to scientific anthropological research objectives.

Readings: Part I, p. 1; and Ch. 1, pp. 3-13, “What are the challenges in ethnographic fieldwork?” in *Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition*.

Addresses:
• research methods used in ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation;
• challenges and ethics faced by anthropologists in fieldwork;
• Cases of Note: Jun Li and female gambling, Robert Tonkinson in Western Desert of Australia, Bruce Knauft in Papua New Guinea, and William C. Young in Sudan.

**Unit 3: The Nature of Culture**

*Objective:* to introduce concepts essential to the study of humankind, including culture. Students will explore the characteristics of culture, and be encouraged to associate concepts such as pluralistic society, enculturation, and biculturalism with their everyday life.

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

• develop an inclusive definition of culture;
• identify the characteristics of culture and relate to cultural behaviour;
• explain the enculturative processes involved in transmitting culture from one generation to another;
• discuss the impact of transnational flow of Western ideals to other societies, using body image and the beauty industry;
• expound on the experiences of global nomads and the impact living abroad has on their identity and worldview;
• identify the benefits and challenge of being a Third Culture Kid.

Reading: Ch. 6, pp. 75-87, “How does body image affect self-esteem, well-being, and identity?” in *Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition*.

Addresses:
• role of anthropology in the study of transnational flows or globalization of body ideals;
• cultural perceptions of beauty that impact status, position, and security;
• political, cultural, and economic machinations that influence perceptions of an ideal body;
• Cases of Note: fatness among Tuareg of the Sahara, body modification among Modern Primitives, cyberpunks, and queer subculture.
Reading: Ch. 4, pp. 45-57, “How do living, studying, and working in a foreign culture affect people?” in *Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition*.

Addresses:
- challenges of global nomads, including biculturalism, reverse culture shock, enculturation;
- future role of anthropologists in studying global nomadism;
- Third Culture Kids.

**Unit 4: Communication and Culture**

*Objective:* to examine the nature of language and communication, and the role of anthropology in protecting linguistic diversity. Interrelationships between culture and language are closely examined, as well the impact of instant information and communication on human perceptions of the world.

By the end of this unit students will be able to:
- define language and discuss its importance to human culture;
- explain the role of linguistic anthropologists in language revitalization;
- understand the influence language has on culture, and culture on language;
- demonstrate an understanding of the processes involved in language loss and language shift and explain the reasons behind language loss;
- evaluate language revitalization projects and determine why some are successful, others not;
- address the power and influence of social media on culture change.

Reading: Ch. 3, pp. 27-41, “What roles do anthropologists and speech communities play in language retention and revitalization?” in *Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition*.

Addresses:
- key terms and concepts related to endangered languages;
- language revitalization of endangered languages;
- relevance of linguistic anthropology in assisting speech communities with language revitalization;
- the connection between linguistic survival and political power;
- Cases of Note: Great Andamese, Siletz-Dee-ni, Irish Gaelic, Hebrew, Basque, and Maori languages.

Reading: Ch. 9, pp. 119-132, “What is the role of social media in socio-political revolution?” in *Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition*.

Addresses:
- future role of anthropologists in understanding social media;
• the power of social media to enact cultural change;
• Case of Note: 2011 Egyptian revolution.

Unit 5: Economic Systems

Objective: to examine the way societies regulate the production, distribution, and consumption of goods. Students will also consider the relevance of an anthropological understanding of economic systems in the international and corporate business world.

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

• explain how and why anthropologists study economic systems, and the specializations within economic anthropology;
• identify and describe methods of distribution and exchange;
• discuss the melding of traditional markets with a modern market economy;
• discuss the economic contributions of women in developing nations;
• demonstrate the importance of economic anthropology in the global business community;
• explain the methods used by consumer anthropologists to understand the social and economic meaning of shopping and consumer behaviour;
• discuss ethics in consumer anthropology.


Addresses:
• relevance of anthropology in business and the corporate world and its challenges;
• key concepts and terms in consumer anthropology;
• applied economic anthropology, using anthropological principles and research methods for studying the business environment;
• Case of Note: San Francisco Indian grocery stores.

Unit 6: Sex, Marriage, and the Family

Objective: to investigate human sexuality and the blurring of “gender norms” from a cross-cultural perspective. Students will also explore the various forms of marriage, some ancient, others newly emerging, such as legally recognized same-sex marriage. In recognition of the changing nature of marriage, an attempt to define marriage from a global, inclusive perspective will be encouraged. During their investigations, students will also examine the concept of family and its dynamic nature.

By the end of this unit students will be able to:
• discuss the global diversity in sexual identity, meaning, practices, and acceptance;
• demonstrate an understanding of the challenges in defining marriage inclusively;
• explain the roles of marriage;
• identify and discuss the many forms of marriage, both ancient and recent;
• critically analyze the complex nature of a marriage practice such as female circumcision as it pertains to human rights;
• critically analyze social and political implications of movements to stop female circumcision;
• critically analyze social and political implications of debates over same-sex marriages;
• describe the functions of family in human society;
• compare and contrast the major schools of thought on same-sex marriage.

Reading: Ch. 7, pp. 89-104, “Is female circumcision a violation of human rights or a cherished cultural tradition?” in Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition.

Addresses:
• roles of anthropologists in the social, economic, religious, and political debate on female circumcision;
• historical context of female circumcision;
• reasons behind female circumcision;
• cultural resistance and cultural imperialism with regards to female circumcision;
• difficulties with maintaining a culturally relativistic perspective.

Reading: Ch. 8, pp. 105-118, “What are the socio-economic, religious, and political implications of same-sex marriage and changing family structure?” in Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition.

Addresses:
• the nature of marriage and its roles in society;
• interrelatedness of social norms, religious tenets, economic realities, and political manipulation in marriage;
• the role of anthropology in the study of same-sex marriage;
• same-sex marriage in traditional societies and in modern societies;
• schools of thought on same-sex marriage
• changing family structure and same-sex marriage.

Unit 7: Kinship

Objective: to examine kinship and its roles in families and communities. Students also examine social identity and the way people go about acquiring their identity.

By the end of this unit students will be able to:
• explain the importance of kinship networks and their relationship to other systems of culture;
describe the changing structure of family;
discuss the value of kin for social support.

Kinship is reviewed throughout the text. Of particular note:

Reading: Ch. 5, pp. 70-72, section on Refugees and Humanitarian Crises in “What are the underlying reasons for ethnic conflict, and the consequences of these conflicts?” in *Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition*.

Addresses:
- challenges to maintaining kinship networks in dispersed and stressed populations.

Reading: Ch. 8, pp. 115-116, section on Same-Sex Marriage and Family Structure in “What are the socio-economic, religious, and political implications of same-sex marriage and changing family structure?” in *Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition*.

Addresses:
- changing family structure.

**Unit 8: Social Stratification**

*Objective*: to consider the reasons behind social stratification and its effect on members of society.

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- explain how societies are stratified and the reasons for this social stratification;
- explain the reasons behind ethnic, gender, and age stratification;
- critically assess whether purdah is a symbol of gender stratification.

Reading: Ch. 12, pp. 165-179, “Is the practice of purdah and wearing the hijab oppressive to women or an expression of their identity?” in *Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition*.

Addresses:
- cross-cultural comparison of the social, religious, and political implications of hijab and purdah;
- gender stratification and oppression;
- Cases of Note: Palestine, Iran, and Afghanistan.

**Unit 9: Political Organization and Social Control**

*Objective*: to investigate how political organization facilitates social order within and between societies and the causes of political discord.
By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- explain how internal political and social control is maintained in society;
- discuss the economic, political, social, and religious reasons for ethnic conflict.

Reading: Ch. 5, pp. 59-74, “What are the underlying reasons for ethnic conflict, and the consequences of these conflicts?” in Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition.

Addresses:
- key concepts such as discrimination, exploitation, ethnicity, race, genocide;
- anthropology’s role in understanding ethnic conflict
- the causes and implications of ethnic conflict;
- refugees;
- Case of Note: Darfur

Unit 10: Religion and the Supernatural

Objective: to examine the features of religion and the role of religion in culture change.

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- explain why religion is a universal system of culture;
- identify the roles of religion in human society;
- identify and discuss the major features of religion;
- discuss the role of religion and revitalization movements in culture change;
- critically analyze the impact of missionism in culture change.

Reading: Ch. 11, pp. 156, section on Missionism and NGOs in “What benefits do NGOs provide developing countries, and how can their presence generate new challenges?” in Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition.

Addresses:
- missionism and its impact on cultural groups;
- cultural/religious imperialism;
- impact of culture change via missionism.

Unit 11: Socio-Cultural Change

Objective: to address culture change, in particular the impact of globalization processes and Western modernization on cultural groups. Students will also review the mechanisms of culture change and problems associated with these changes.
By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- identify and discuss the mechanisms of change in a culture;
- explain the consequences of acculturation on cultural groups;
- recognize the processes and consequences involved in modernization;
- recognize the inevitability of change in all cultures, but also identify the problems associated with rapid or forced change, and immigration to new localities;
- discuss the roles of NGOs on perpetuating culture change;
- discuss the cultural implications of human migration and cultural flow;

Reading: Ch. 11, pp. 149-163, “What benefits do NGOs provide developing countries, and how can their presence generate new challenges?” in *Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition.*

Addresses:
- the goals of NGOs and possible harmful effects of this outside aid;
- key concepts, such as modernization, children’s rights, human rights, cultural sensitivity;
- roles of anthropology in development;
- Case of Note: Haiti.


Addresses:
- social, economic, and political challenges of immigration;
- key terms and concepts, including modern-day slavery, systemic racism, multiculturalism;
- roles of anthropology in studying transnational communities;
- Cases of Note: history of immigration to Canada and United States, human trafficking in Thailand, and ethnic discrimination in France.

**Unit 12: Applied Anthropology**

*Objective:* to explore the many avenues of applied research within anthropology.

By the end of this unit students will be able to:

- recognize the contributions anthropology can make in planning for humanity’s future;
- identify the roles anthropologists assume in information dissemination, development planning, and advocacy;
- explain the relevance of anthropology to the global community.

Reading: Conclusion, pp. 181-183 in *Anthropology Matters, 2nd edition.*
Addresses:
  • the value of anthropology;
  • future roles and goals of anthropology.