



MOBILITY AND CULTURE

ANTH 210.001: HONORS INTRODUCTION TO
CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

MW, 2-3:15 PM

LI-316

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Office Hours:

Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:30-1:30 pm

class description :

One hundred years ago, anthropologists considered other cultures as fundamentally isolated from one another. For example, in his 1922 *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, the legendary anthropologist and fieldworker Bronislaw Malinowski urged his readers to “imagine yourself suddenly set down surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native village, while the launch or dinghy which has brought you sails away out of sight” (4).

The assumption there--that others cultures are (literally) remote islands that we visit in order to discover the inexplicably native other--is a fiction. The world's cultures were never so isolated and unconnected as anthropologists and ethnographers once thought. Today, this claim is even more suspect; it's clear that the changes wrought by processes of modernization have drawn us closer than ever before.

Today, anthropologists consider culture, societies and people as mobile, shifting and fungible--connecting across geographic space in powerful and occasionally surprising ways. With these conceptual changes have come new methods--new ways of doing anthropology. We no longer purport to grasp the whole of culture; instead, mobile (and motile) culture sets us on our own perambulations on the trail of the social and cultural connections people (including anthropologists) make.

But the same forces that stimulate new movements of people, ideas, and imaginaries for some at the very same time limit those for others, by, for example, enacting laws that fix people in a place or an identity, limiting access to information and communications by surveilling the public, or even by reducing whole populations to what Giorgio Agamben has called "bare life" (1998). But, at whatever place we occupy in this, we are all entangled in these open-ended processes of modernization.

Caught in their own movements and connections, anthropologists look to these contradictions to understand contemporary culture, and it is into these contrasts between movement and fixity to which we shall look. In this class, students will learn about cultural anthropology through the heuristics of mobile culture.

This is not only a thematic approach to the study of cultural anthropology, but a guiding metaphor for the class. We begin with an examination of some of the practices popularly associated with cultural anthropology--magic and religion. But these people--as much as anyone else--are utilizing these cultural forms in the context of movement and connection. Like us, people elsewhere attempt to make the most of opportunities to move: socially, culturally and economically.

They are simultaneously the victims of movement--flights of capital, resettlements, realignments, reterritorializations. At the same time people align themselves to connect to new forms of mobility and culture, other forces attempt to fix them in place. Whether we see this through the idiom of magic or through more familiar cultural practices, there are still similar practices afoot.

This becomes even more evident as we move from the putatively "exotic" to something more familiar--to the world of investment banking and hedge fund

investment. Here, on the other end of the spectrum of privilege, we can observe many of the same practices--modernization by other means.

Finally, students will turn to their own lives and examine them using the same theories and methods. Making this circuit of "exotic" and "familiar," "other" and "self," students will have simultaneously sketched an arc of movement, one that implies a circuit of connectivity.

It is this kind of reflexivity that characterizes the anthropological project, one that is, as we shall find, not just ultimately about interpretation, but, like the people we study and their social and cultural practices, all about finding our own place in a world characterized by both dizzying freedom and terrible oppression.

In this class, we will consider all aspects of cultural anthropology, both historically (from the 18th century to the present) and synchronically, in the careful analysis of case studies and ethnographic films. Our goals are threefold: 1) to map the space of cultural anthropology as an academic discipline; 2) to make thematic and epistemological connections between anthropology and other academic disciplines; and 3) to understand the relevance of cultural anthropology for everyday, modern life.

Upon successful completion of this course, engaged students should be able to:

- Identify and explain key concepts, theories and debates in contemporary, cultural anthropology.
- Connect social and cultural practices to larger contexts of politics, economics, and power.
- Apply anthropological perspectives to critique ethnocentric assumptions and to address contemporary, human problems.
- Effectively communicate anthropological findings learned in the course.

required readings:

The following texts are available in the campus bookstore:

Ho, Karen (2009). *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Lindquist, Galina (2006). *Conjuring Hope: Healing and Magic in Contemporary Russia*. NY: Berghahn Books.

Urry, John (2008). *Mobilities*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

recommended readings:

Collins, Samuel Gerald (2009). *Library of Walls: the Library of Congress and the Contradictions of Information Society*. St. Paul, MN: Litwin Books.

required software:

Egonet. <http://sourceforge.net/projects/egonet/>

graded assignments

attendance Attendance in this course is required. Here's how it works: students begin the course with an "A" in attendance but, for each class missed, lose two points. However: each student can miss two "grace classes" before being penalized. 30 pts.

Assignments (deadlines announced) Utilizing readings, media from class, open-source software and their own ethnographic investigations, students will reflect on society and culture in the context of mobility. During the semester, students will produce four (4) two-page reflections. A style sheet for each assignment will be posted. 60 pts.

midterm exam The first exam will test both your knowledge and understanding with a battery of multiple choice, "True-False" and "fill-in-the-blank" questions. 60 pts

final exam The final examination will ask you to synthesize themes from the course and compare the experiences and ironies of modernization and mobility in our two ethnographies and films with those in your own life. 50 pts

class grading

Your final grade will be computed by adding together the following point values for graded assignments and examinations:

Attendance: 30 pts.

Assignments: 60 pts.

Midterm Exam: 60 pts.

Final Exam: 50 pts.

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200 pts.

A 186+

A- 180-185

B+ 174-179

B 166-173

B- 160-165

C+ 154-159

C 140-153

D+ 134-139

D 120-133

F <120

class schedule:

1st Week Introduction to the course and explanation of syllabus.

(8/31-9/2) What is anthropology?

Assigned Reading: Urry, pp. 44-60

2nd Week Fundamental Concepts: Culture, Mobility, Connection

(9/7-9/9) Assigned Reading: Urry, 63-89.

Lindquist, pp. ix-xx, 1-22

September 7: Labor Day.

September 9: Change of schedule period ends.

3rd Week **Globalization and Multiple Modernities**

(9/14-9/16) Film: Ruoma de shi qi sui (2004)

Assigned Reading: Urry, pp. 90-111

Lindquist, pp. 23-52

4th Week **Ritual Life**

(9/21-9/23) Film: A State of Mind (2005)

Assigned Reading: Urry, pp. 112-134

Lindquist, pp. 53-80

5th Week **Magic and Religion**

(9/28-9/30) Film: The Split Horn (2001)

Assigned Reading: Urry, pp. 135-156

Lindquist, pp. 81-112

6th Week **Midterm Examination**

(10/5-10/7)

7th Week **Ethnographic Methods**

(10/12-10/14) Assigned Reading: Urry, pp. 157-210

Lindquist, pp. 113-136

8th Week **Family and Kinship**

(10/19-10/21) Assigned Readings: Urry, pp. 211-252

Lindquist, pp. 137-169

Ho, pp. 1-38

9th Week Ideology and Cultural Acquisition, Part I

(10/26-10/28)

Assigned Reading: Urry, pp. 253-270

Lindquist, pp. 170-198

Ho, pp. 39-72

10th Week Ideology and Cultural Acquisition, Part II

(11/2-11/4) Film: My Name is Kim Sam-soon (2004)

Assigned Reading: Urry, pp. 271-290

Lindquist, pp. 199-227

Ho, pp. 73-121

11th Week Media and Society of the Spectacle

(11/9-11/11) Film: TBA

Assigned Reading:

Ho, pp. 122-168

November 11: Last day to withdraw.

12th Week: Work and Life

(11/16-11/18)

Assigned Reading:

Ho, pp. 169-212

13th Week Anthropologies of Science

(11/23-11/25) Film: TBA

Assigned Reading:

Ho, pp. 213-248

14th Week

Thanksgiving

(11/30-12/2)

Assigned Reading:

Ho, pp. 249-293

15th Week **Cultural Critique**

(12/7-12/9)

Assigned Reading:

Ho, pp. 294-324

notes

1. Although exams and graded work will remain as stated above, I may have to change different

readings or films on the syllabus throughout the semester. I will, in any case, try to give you

ample warning of any syllabus changes.

2. Cheating and Plagiarism policy: Our department has the following policy on academic dishonesty:

The faculty of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology & Criminal Justice take a strong stand against *Academic Dishonesty* of all forms. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in any class. It includes, but is not limited to, any form of cheating or unapproved help on an exam or academic exercise, copying someone else's written work without citation, presenting fabricated information as legitimate, any unauthorized collaboration among students, or assisting someone to cheat in any way. All students have the ethical responsibility for doing their own work. A

student who is uncertain about whether or not something constitutes academic dishonesty in a particular class has the obligation to see their instructor for clarification. Consistent with university policy, the minimum penalty for academic dishonesty in any form is determined by the individual faculty member in each class, and may consist of “a reduced grade (including “F” or zero) for the assignment; a reduced grade (including “F”) for the entire course,” or other options as stipulated in Appendix F of the Undergraduate Catalog. Students who are charged with academic dishonesty must remain enrolled in the course and cannot withdraw. Instructors who make the determination that academic dishonesty has occurred will notify the student in writing of the finding, the penalty, and the process for appeal. The same written notice will be forwarded to the Office of Judicial Affairs on campus, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, and to the Chair’s Office in the department. *Academic Dishonesty* undermines the legitimate efforts of students and involves serious repercussions. The faculty of the department urge all our students to act with integrity with regard to work submitted. (Approved Spring 2004)

In addition, Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the University’s policy:

<http://wwwnew.towson.edu/provost/resources/studentacademic.asp>

At a minimum, students who plagiarize in this class will receive an “F” for the assignment.

3. Students who have, or suspect that they may have, a disability should seek services through Disability Support Services. Students must be registered with DSS and receive written authorization to obtain disability-related accommodations. If you need accommodation due to a disability, please visit DSS for guidance. The office is located at 7720 York Road, AD 232, Ph: 4-2638 or 3475.

4. Students may not repeat this course more than once (make a third attempt at this course) without the prior approval of the Academic Standards Committee. Please call 4-4351 or visit ES 235 for more information.

5. Late assignments: Late assignments will be accepted at ½ credit (1-2 days late) or ¼ credit (3-4 days late). After 4 days, late assignments will no longer be accepted.

6. Make-up Work: Under extraordinary circumstances, documented by physicians, police, etc., students may be allowed to make-up missed work.

7. Students who are disruptive may be dismissed from class.

8. Emergency Statement (TU Office of the Provost)

In the event of a University-wide emergency, including the impact of the H1N1 flu pandemic, course requirements, classes, deadlines and grading schemes are subject to changes that may include alternative delivery methods, alternative methods of interaction with the instructor, class materials, and/or classmates, a revised attendance policy, and a revised semester calendar and/or grading scheme. In the case of a University-wide emergency, **I will attempt to communicate with you via e-mail and/or the Blackboard site.**

For up-to-date information on the H1N1 flu, see the Dowell Health Center website at: <http://www.towson.edu/dowellhealthcenter/> and click on the “Flu Facts” link.

For more general information about any emergency situation, please refer to the following:

Web Site: www.towson.edu

Telephone Number: 410-704-2000

TU Text Alert System Sign-up at:

<http://www.towson.edu/adminfinance/facilities/police/campusemergency/>). This is a service designed to alert the Towson University community via text messages to cell phones when situations arise on campus that affect the ability of the campus - students, faculty and staff - to function normally.

H1N1 Influenza Policy Statement (TU Office of the Provost): “Students should not attend classes or other university events from the onset of flu-like symptoms until at least 24 hours after the fever subsides without the use of fever reducing medications. Such absences will be considered excused absences; however, students are responsible for the material covered during the period of their absence.”

explanation of grading

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Consistent with University policy, the following grades will be assigned according to the designated criteria:

A: A superior performance surpassing assigned work in unique and novel ways and integrating diverse ideas from a wide range of sources in addition to those discussed in class.

A-

B+

B: Excellent work surpassing the expectations of the assignment and demonstrating initiative

and a willingness to move beyond the basic requirements of the assigned work.

B-

C+

C: Satisfactory work meeting all basic requirements of the assignment.

D+

D: Work in some way less than satisfactory. Although conforming to basic requirements in

some way, the completed work is nevertheless not a coherent response to the assignment.

F: A profoundly unsatisfactory performance which doesn't meet the intent of the assignment at any level.