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Chaminade University

L 27

Winter 2000

AN 200: CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Dr. Usha K. Prasad

Class Meetings: On-line

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Texts: Cultural Anthropology, 2nd Ed. 1997, by Richard H. Robbins

Course Description: In the most broadest sense anthropology is the study of humankind. This course is designed to provide an introduction to the subdiscipline of cultural anthropology, or the study of humans as cultural beings. Culture is unique to humans and cultural anthropologists are interested in comparing the similarities and differences that exist among human groups; this is known as the cross-cultural perspective. The textbook provides examples of the many variations found in behavioral similarities and differences in societies throughout the world. Culture is presented as a complex and dynamic mechanism by which human beings adjust to the variety of environmental and societal demands posed by existence. Culture is defined as a system of concepts, ideas, values, attitudes and beliefs that is learned and shared within a human group. It is: 1) used to make things, generate behaviors and interpret experiences; 2) a way of thinking about and looking at the world; 3) symbolic and ideational; and lastly, 4) culture is adaptive, changing to meet the needs of life's various circumstances.

Course Objectives:

1. To increase our understanding of the varied similarities and differences that exist among cultures.
2. To gain a better understanding of ourselves as social beings who are completely reliant on learned and shared behavior.
3. To develop a greater awareness of the role of culture in human existence, and ask if is the way "my culture" does things the "only way".
4. To encourage critical thinking, especially in evaluating the validity of anthropological methods and investigations;
5. Give hands-on experience in conducting anthropological research.

Requirements and Grading:

Students are responsible for reading and understanding the syllabus, and for meeting deadlines for readings and assignments. Please contact me (usha@lava.net) if you have any questions about the syllabus. The final course grade for this course consists of the following:

| | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Ethnographic Exercises (2) | 40% |
| 2. Ethnographic Fieldwork | 30% |
| 3. Web Board Discussion Participation; 8 sessions @ 2 pts./session | 15% |
| 5. Final Exam | <u>15%</u> |
| | 100% |

Deadlines:

It is imperative that you observe all deadlines for readings and exercises. This requires self-motivation and self-discipline on your part. Assignments that are late will not be accepted and make-up assignments will not be given. The only exceptions will be if you have a documented reason for missing an assignment (and its your responsibility to deliver this to me), and you have contacted me well in advance of the assigned due date.

Web Proficiency:

Since this course is based almost entirely on using Internet applications, it is your responsibility to know (or learn) how to use the Internet, send e.mail, and use the WebBoard program. There are online tutorials available for all of these applications.

WebBoard Participation:

Participation on the WebBoard makes up 15% of your grade. This course is **structured** so students will learn as much from each other's contribution as they will from the book, assignments, and my guidance. There are a series of weekly discussion groups on our WebBoard focused on problems from our textbook and/or the ethnographic exercises. Discussions open on the first day of that week (Sunday) and close the following Saturday. You must contribute to each discussion in order to **earn** points. Full points are awarded for answers that reflect the fact that you have read and thought about your assigned readings in the text and other sources.

E.mail:

An e.mail directory of students in the class is provided so students can correspond with one another. It is essential that you let us know if your e.mail address changes during the course. Check your e.mail and the WebBoard regularly.

Ethnographic Exercises:

An ethnographic exercise is what a student produces in **HIS/HER OWN WORDS**, after completing readings (from the course and from non-assigned reading materials), that explains aspects about a particular culture or subculture. Each exercise should be no less than 3 but no more than 5 pages (double-spaced).

All sources referenced need to be fully and completely documented. Ethnographic exercises will be posted on the course web page for other students to read. All students will be responsible for this material on the final.

Characteristics of an "A" caliber paper:

A clear indication that the student has read and understands materials related to the assignment, including relevant text chapters and reference sources.

Appropriate examples taken from the relevant chapters and additional references that are used to illustrate the students' arguments. Proper use and evaluation of examples demonstrates analytical ability.

Very few grammatical or spelling errors, and written in an academic manner.

Student provides full citations for all sources used.

Characteristics of a "B" caliber paper:

Student relies primarily on describing/summarizing the reading, rather than analysis.

Does not use sufficient examples and/or outside research to support points.

Some grammatical/spelling errors.

Written in professional academic style, including full citations.

Characteristics of a "C" caliber paper:

Paper is primarily descriptive, rather than analytical.
Student fails to draw outside research and examples to bolster his/her argument.
Significant number of grammatical/spelling errors.
Tone of paper is informal rather than academic.

Characteristics of a "D" or "F" caliber paper:

fails to meet the minimum requirement outlined above.
Sloppily written, with a clear lack of time and effort put into the work.

NOTE: Failure to provide full citations for any work that is not your own, whether intentional or unintentional (e.g. plagiarism) will result in an automatic "F" in the course, as well as possible academic penalties.

Ethnographic Fieldwork:

One of the fundamental “stuff” of cultural anthropology is doing ethnographic fieldwork. You are required to observe (and participate if necessary), some cultural event, and then write a mini-ethnography on your observations. Examples of cultural events include: weddings, funerals, baby lu'au, sports events (e.g. canoe racing, surfing, etc.). If needed, I will offer suggestions of events. Take notes on your observations, and write a 3-5 page paper (double-spaced). The paper is to be turned into me with your original notes attached.

SCHEDULE: WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS and EXERCISES

| <u>Date</u> (read by) | <u>Topic</u> | <u>Required Reading(s)</u> |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 1-15-00 | Review of the course Syllabus Introduction to the course/Anthropology | Robbins Chap 1 |
| 1-22-00 | Culture and Meaning | Chap. 1 (con't). |
| 1-29-00 | From Prehistory to Colonialism to modern Industrial societies Ethnographic Exercise #1 to be posted* | Robbins Chap 2 |
| 2-05-00 | Symbolism in human societies | Robbins Chap 3 |
| 2-12-00 | Family relations | Robbins Chap 4 |
| 2-19-00 | Cultural identity Ethnographic Exercise #2 to be posted* | Robbins Chap 5 |
| 2-26-00 | Social hierarchies | Robbins Chap 6 |
| 3-04-00 | Conflict, violence and warfare | Robbins Chap 7 |
| 3-11-00 | Cultural diversity Ethnographic Fieldwork * | Robbins Chap 8 |

Final Exam: Place and time to be announced

*Dates here are the final due dates, however, any assignments may be turned in ahead of their due date. The paper resulting from the Ethnographic Fieldwork is to be dropped off (**hardcopy**) in the designated box in the mailroom in Henry Hall.

Any changes to this syllabus will be posted in advance.