

Chaminade University

Fall 2001

**AN 200: CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

Dr. Usha K. Prasad

Class Meetings: On-line

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Texts: 1) Other People's Worlds, An Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology, 1999, by Joy Hendry  
 2) A War of Witches: A Journey into the Underworld of the Contemporary Aztecs, 1993, by Timothy J. Knab.

Course Description: In the 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 social and cultural beings. Culture is unique to humans and cultural anthropologists are interested in comparing the similarities and differences that exist among human groups. The textbook provides some examples of the many variations found in cultures throughout the world. Culture is presented as a complex and dynamic mechanism by which human beings adjust to their environment; it's also a means by which human groups alter their environment to suit their particular needs, beliefs and behaviors. Broadly defined, culture is a system of concepts, ideas, values, attitudes and beliefs that is learned and shared by human groups. Culture: 1) is used to make things, generate behaviors and interpret experiences; 2) is a way of thinking about and looking at the world; 3) is symbolic and ideational; and lastly, 4) it 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 us 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. After receiving the syllabus, you are required to submit acknowledgement of having read and understood the course requirements. Please contact me ( [usha@lava . net](mailto:usha@lava.net) ) if you have any questions about the syllabus. The final course grade for this course consists of the following:

1.	Web Board Participation; 8 sessions @ 2 pts./session	15%
2.	Book review	25%
3.	Ethnographic Fieldwork	30%
4.	Final Exam	30%
		100%

Any student who does not complete ANY ONE of the above will automatically receive an incomplete.

### Deadlines:

It is imperative that you observe all deadlines for readings and exercises. This requires self-motivation and self-discipline on your part. Late assignments will not be accepted. Make-up assignments will not be given. The only exceptions will be if you have a documented reason for missing an assignment (and it's 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 page. 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. Each Sunday afternoon, questions based on the textbook (see corresponding chapter on the following page) and general presentations will be posted. You are to answer each of these questions by the following Saturday (evening). Your response to the questions can be in the form of a discussion; in other words, if a subject really interests you and you want more feedback and input from others, by all means express it in your answer as an open board discussion. You must contribute to each question 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. Other sources here include general experience, other readings or media 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 me know if your e.mail address changes during the course. Check your e.mail and the WebBoard regularly.

### 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 of your observations. Examples of cultural events include: weddings, funerals, baby lu'au, sports events (e.g. canoe racing, surfing, etc.). Or your fieldwork can examine/assess a particular aspect about a particular culture or subculture, such as specific religious denominations (**Mormons**, Buddhists, etc.) gay rights/issues, the U.S. military, etc. As needed, I will offer suggestions of events. You must get approval for your topic from me in advance prior to doing any fieldwork. The paper that you turn in will consist of notes taken during your observations and/or participation. For instance, if you decide to do a survey, you must submit the survey contents (questionnaire, responses, etc.) as an attachment to your paper. The final paper will be 5-7 pages (excluding attachments), (double-spaced) and typewritten. All sources referenced in your mini-ethnography paper need to be fully and completely documented. The reader for this course, A War of Witches, is an example of the results of ethnographic fieldwork by a cultural anthropologist. Following is a guideline for how the paper will be evaluated and graded.

As a guideline, here are some of the "basic" ingredients that need to be incorporated into your paper.

Characteristics of an "A" caliber paper:

A clear indication that the student has an understanding of his/her subject matter.

Appropriate examples taken from the relevant chapters and additional references that are used to illustrate the students' statements. 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, without an effort at 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 (e.g. textbook, course reader, etc.) 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.

## SCHEDULE: WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS and EXERCISES

<u>Date</u> (read by)	<u>Topic</u>	Required <u>Reading</u> so
10-06-01	Review of the course Syllabus	Hendry Introduction &
10-13-01	Introduction to the course/Anthropology	Chap. 1
10-20-01	Culture and Meaning	Hendry Chap. 2
10-27-01	Reciprocity and Gift giving/exchange Rituals in Society	Hendry Chap. 3 Hendry Chap. 4
11-03-01	Symbolism in human societies Culture and Art	Hendry Chap. 5 Hendry Chap. 6
11-10-01	Religion <b>and</b> Magic Witchcraft, Shamanism, Sorcery	Hendry Chap. 7 Hendry Chap. 8
11-17-01	<i>A War of Witches</i>	Knab - all
11-24-01	Social control; Law and Order Politics	Hendry Chap. 9 Hendry Chap. 10
12-01-01	Family, Kinship and Marriage Ethnographic Fieldwork (Mini Ethnography) Paper due	Hendry Chap. 11
12-08-01	Environment and Culture	Hendry Chap. 12

Final Exam: Place and time to be announced

\*Dates here are the dates by which the readings should be completed, and answers should be posted on to the web board page. 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 Evening Program Office in Henry Hall (3<sup>rd</sup> floor).

Any changes to this syllabus will be posted in advance.