

SYLLABUS
CULTURE AND SOCIETY
ANTH 2300.100
SPRING 2026

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00-12:30 (in office) and Wednesdays 12:30-2:00 (Zoom); or by appointment

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30 and Thursdays 11:00-12:00PM

Office: Lefty's Lounge (Sycamore 119)

Class meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:50AM

Meeting location: Wooten Hall 316

Email Policies:

1. Please allow 48 hours for a response to your email. Emails sent during the weekend will be treated as if sent on Monday morning.
2. When emailing your professor or your Instructional Assistant, please use your UNT email account vs. Canvas email. Be sure to include the course name or number and section (ANTH 2300.100) in the subject line along with the topic of the email.

Course Description

Humans are social and cultural beings; our very survival depends upon it. This course introduces students to the field of cultural anthropology, which is the study of human cultures in their diversity and variations. Rather than providing a collection of facts about other cultures, however, this class attempts to help students understand, and utilize, the general approach anthropologists take when they study a culture; in other words, it will help you to *think like an anthropologist*. In this class, we will focus on asking critical questions, rather than simply memorizing an inventory of answers.

Thinking like an anthropologist is a critical life and career skill in our globalized world. We interact with people from different cultural backgrounds than our own at a more rapid pace than ever before and across all domains of life. Furthermore, every day we see ample evidence of how social institutions and cultural norms influence fundamental aspects of our lives-- from the distribution of wealth, to the fate of the environment, to how we understand people who are different from ourselves. In this course, you will learn new analytical and methodological tools for understanding cultural difference, social organization, and social change.

Course Objectives

- Learn and apply key anthropological concepts and frameworks
- Learn and practice methodologies used by cultural anthropologists
- Develop an awareness of the complexity and diversity of cultures and societies within the United States and around the world
- Understand and analyze your own experience as a cultural and social being
- Develop and utilize critical thinking skills
- Develop and utilize written and oral communication skills

Required Texts and Other Readings

One textbook is required for this course, entitled “*Essentials of Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age*, ed. 4E. by Kenneth J. Guest. (Make sure you get the **4th** edition!) The text is available at the UNT University Bookstore.

Additional articles and other required course materials will be posted on our course webpage for your downloading pleasure. All readings listed on the syllabus are required unless otherwise marked.

Important Things to Know to Succeed in this Class

Late work: As a general rule, I do not accept late assignments unless you have received my approval. However, if you think you will miss a grade for a reason other than a documented medical excuse or family emergency, please get in touch with me prior to the deadline and we may be able to work something out. Even if it only gets you partial credit, that is better than no credit at all!

Electronics in the Classroom: Please turn off your cell phone/silence the ringer prior to coming to class. Students are asked to refrain from using their phones during the class period. Students should only use laptop computers to take notes and for class purposes; please do not use it for checking email, using social

media, etc. **Wearing ear buds or headphones during class is not allowed, unless permission is given by the professor.**

Extra Credit: Extra credit can be earned at any point during the semester. I will suggest several opportunities to the class as they arise, and I am open to creative ideas from you. Some ideas for possible extra credit suggestions might include: analysis of a relevant movie/documentary; summary and discussion about a talk/lecture on campus, description and analysis of relevant cultural event, festival, or location that you attend; creating an artistic piece such as poetry, painting, sculpture or music. I once had a student create a relevant playlist for me! You must get approval from me ahead of time for your choice, so check with me before you do the work.

Academic Honesty: The Department of Anthropology expects its students to abide by the high ethical standards of practicing professionals within the field of anthropology. The Department does not tolerate cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, or sabotage. This includes the use of unauthorized professional writing/editing services and generative AI for assignments. Students are expected to follow the [American Anthropological Association's code of ethics](http://ethics.americananthro.org/category/statement/): "In their capacity as researchers, anthropologists are subject to the ethical principles guiding all scientific and scholarly conduct. They must not plagiarize, nor fabricate or falsify evidence, or knowingly misrepresent information or its source"

(<http://ethics.americananthro.org/category/statement/>).

- The UNT policy on Academic Misconduct defines Cheating as the physical or electronic **distribution or use** of answers for graded components, such as discussion posts, writing assignments, and exams.
- Plagiarism is defined as misrepresenting the work of others (whether published or not) as your own.
- Plagiarism may be inadvertent or intentional. **That is, plagiarism is still plagiarism even if you “didn’t mean to do it.”** Any facts, statistics, quotations, or paraphrasing of any information that is not common knowledge should be cited.
- **Students who are suspected of cheating or plagiarism will receive an automatic zero on the assessment.** I also reserve the right to pursue further disciplinary action within the UNT system. In this instance, students will be provided the opportunity for a hearing; if found guilty they can receive an automatic “F” in the course. Multiple violations may result in dismissal from the university.
- For additional resources to help with paper writing, including how to avoid plagiarism and how to use citations, see the [Department of Anthropology Writing Guide](#). In addition, students are encouraged to make use of the [UNT Writing Center](#).

- For more information on the University's policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and dishonesty, see the UNT [Student Academic Integrity policy](#).

Two more points about this:

- A) In this class, you are expected to do your own work. All assignments will be run through Turnitin (an application integrated into Canvas that compares the text of student submissions to an extensive electronic database and assesses for use of generative AI) or other AI content detectors. Even without that, I will likely be able to tell if the writing is not yours. It is better to talk with me about why the assignment is not complete, or to ask for help on in-text citations, rather than passing off someone else's work as your own or using AI to complete the assignments.
- B) Cheating/Plagiarism/use of generative AI are also issues related to the politics of citation and representation. When you represent someone else's thoughts/writing as your own, you are denying them credit for their intellectual work. AI generators pull from multiple sources of information but do not always give credit to all of the sources of information that are used. Especially when authors are women, persons of color, queer, and/or are born outside the United States and Europe, plagiarism is yet another way in which certain voices are marginalized within the western academy. Actions have meaning. Please do your own thinking and cite your sources.

Academic Accommodations: The University of North Texas is committed to providing accommodation for all students. If you have or acquire a disability that may affect your participation in class, I will strive to accommodate your needs. To ensure that the necessary accommodations are made, be sure to contact the Office of Disability Accommodation (located in Sage Hall) as soon as possible to ensure your needs are met in a timely manner. They will work with both of us to ensure proper accommodations are made. If you need accommodations, please remember that reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Office of Disability Accommodation. Note that students need to obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at <http://www.unt.edu/oda>. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

Resources

Names and Pronouns: I will gladly honor your request to call you by a name that differs from school records as well as the pronouns that you use. I also

understand that we grow and change in how we understand ourselves, therefore appropriate name and pronouns can change during the semester. So, please advise me of how to address you whenever you feel comfortable, safe, and ready to do so. You can add pronouns to your Canvas account here <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/How-do-I-select-personal-pronouns-in-my-user-account-as-a-ta-p/456>.

UNT Food Pantry: Any current UNT student in need can visit the Food Pantry 8am-6pm Monday-Thursday and 8am-5pm on Fridays. Students will check-in at the Dean of Students Office front desk in the Union, Suite 409. Students may go directly to room 366 from 5PM-6PM, Monday-Thursday. Students who visit the food pantry can also request to meet with a staff member to discuss any difficulties they may be facing during the hours of 8am-5pm. When appropriate, referral to additional campus and/or community resources will be made. The Dean of Students Office has established protocols that allow for student confidentiality and dignity to be maintained. In addition, there is a pantry located at the Discovery Park Location in the Engineering Library (M130) next to the Career Center, as well as a Food Pantry located at UNT's Frisco campus, which can be accessed by visiting the information desk.

TECHNICAL HELP/ASSISTANCE

UNT IT Helpdesk

Phone: 940-565-2324

E-Mail: helpdesk@unt.edu

Location: Sage Hall, Room 130

Technology Resources

<http://it.unt.edu/helpdesk>

ACADEMIC HELP/ASSISTANCE

UNT Learning Center

The UNT Learning Center provides a variety of tutoring services that are open to you—including online tutoring for distance students. Check out their website for more information here: <https://learningcenter.unt.edu/tutoring>

UNT Writing Center

Also, the UNT Writing Center provides assistance with any academic writing needs. This is a great resource for this class given how much writing you will do! Find more about their services here: <https://writingcenter.unt.edu>

Canvas Privacy Policy: <https://www.instructure.com/policies/privacy>

Canvas Accessibility Policy: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2061-accessibility-within-canvas>

Emergency Notification and Procedures: UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

EVALUATION AND EXPECTATIONS

Course Expectations

This course requires your engagement with new and sometimes academically rigorous materials. Further, we may cover content in this course that challenges your personal beliefs and opinions. I do not expect you to agree with course materials in order to do well in this class, but I do expect you to a) approach these topics in an open and intellectual fashion and b) **use course content and the provided resources to complete assignments.** Comments that are disrespectful to your classmates and/or myself will not be tolerated.

Grades

This course helps you to develop and use skills important to anthropologists, especially critical reading strategies, research methods, as well as oral and written communication skills. You will have the following opportunities to earn points for the class:

Class Participation	50 pts
In-Class Group Assignments	200 pts
Practicing Participant Observation	150 pts
A Day in the Life Analysis	150 pts
Core Assessment	36 pts
Ethnographic Interview and Report	200 pts

I. Class Participation (50 points)

This class relies on the intellectual commitment and active participation of all students. Active participation means going beyond merely showing up for class and includes: responding to discussion questions that I pose to the class, asking your own questions for clarification, offering relevant contributing information, and respectfully responding to classmates' discussion points. Two participation

grades will be given—one at the midterm and one at the end of the semester (25 points each).

In order for you to participate, you need to have completed the reading assignment for that day. You may want to bring the assigned reading to class each day so that you can refer to them and utilize them during class. You should take notes on lectures and classroom discussions as well as readings, because these notes will come in very handy for the assignments. As part of this grade, you will be evaluated on the frequency and quality of your contributions to class discussion and your participation in group work.

II. In-Class Group Assignments (200 points)

In order to encourage students to come to class, and to come to class having read the required readings, 10 grades will be given throughout the semester for group assignments related to the course readings and content that will be completed at the beginning or during the class period. Group assignments will vary but will involve demonstrating that you have read/understand and can apply the concepts and ideas from the readings for that day's class. Students who are absent will not be given the opportunity to make up these points unless they have a documented excuse and/or have received permission from the instructor ahead of time.

II. Practicing Participant Observation: Fieldnotes, Map, and Reflection (100 points)

Fieldnotes are the backbone of anthropological research. They serve as the record of observations, interactions, and reflections that anthropologists draw upon to analyze cultural practices, social relationships, and meanings. This assignment will help you develop your skills in ethnographic observation, description, and reflexivity by documenting a real-world social setting.

- **Choose a “Field Site”:** Select a **public or semi-public setting** where you can ethically observe without interfering with normal activities (e.g., coffee shop, park, library, community center, farmer's market). Do **not** choose a site where you frequently go and/or have a close personal relationship with participants, as this may influence your observations. Ensure your site is safe, legal, and appropriate for the purposes of this assignment.
- **Conduct Participant Observation (Minimum 45 minutes):** Observe interactions, spatial arrangements, movements, sounds, smells, and other sensory details. **Participate** in the activities taking place to the extent it makes sense given your site. Avoid relying solely on memory—take notes during the observation when possible, but also allow moments to watch without writing.

Pay attention to both the everyday/mundane and the unexpected. Try to consider not only what is present, but what might be absent as well

- **Record Field Notes**

- **Jottings:** Brief, shorthand notes you take during observation (keywords, sketches, snippets of dialogue).
- **Expanded Fieldnotes:** Within 24 hours, rewrite your jottings into full, detailed descriptions. Include complete sentences, context, and sensory information. Make connections between your observations and the concept of “culture” as we have learned about it in class.

Your final submission will have 3 components that can be submitted individually or as 1 document. The submission should include:

1. Expanded Fieldnotes (3 pages). This should be a polished, detailed, and organized record of your observations that includes complete sentences, context, and sensory information. In your expanded fieldnotes, you should address the following:

- In-depth description of the place/space, including structures, landscape elements, natural or man-made objects, the organization and “feeling” of the place, etc.
- In-depth descriptions of the people at the place/space, including demographics, comportment and dress, interactions, expressions of emotions or moods, etc. (see note below)
- **Make a connection to the anthropological concept of “culture” as described in Lesson 3 and/or the textbook to discuss the cultural function, significance, or meaning(s) of this space/place.** In particular, I want you to identify how at least one **key characteristic of culture (i.e. that culture is learned and taught, shared and contested, etc)** are demonstrated within your observations. To do this well, you must also define/describe the anthropological concept(s) you are using.

2. Drawn map of the place/space

3. Reflexive Commentary (500-600 words) that addresses:

- New questions that came up for you from the observation
- How your position (identity, role, perspective) influenced what you noticed
- Any challenges you encountered (e.g., discomfort, distractions)
- How you might approach the observation differently next time

Do not record/report identifying details (full names, specific addresses, etc). If you hear dialogue, paraphrase or anonymize it unless you have explicit permission to quote verbatim.

Keep in mind, the more descriptive detail, the better! Your submission will be evaluated for thoroughness and attention to detail.

Parameters for completing this assignment:

- ***Please do not select a location or event on campus, and I would prefer that this study take place outside of any coffee shops, bars, or other "hangout" spots that you already frequent.*** Choose some place or event that is different for you, it will make this project considerably more interesting!
- Keep in mind you need to be in the space for at least an hour, so do not select a location where this would be difficult or inappropriate to do.
- Wherever you choose, please be respectful of the people who are there.
- Make sure that the site is safe and please be aware of your surroundings.

III. “A Day in the Life” Analysis

This assignment asks you to explore and reflect on your daily life through an anthropological lens, identifying cultural norms, values, practices, and symbols that shape your experiences. This assignment is designed to help you view the "everyday" through an anthropological lens, uncovering the cultural layers embedded in daily life. Some questions you might consider to get you thinking:

- What do you eat, when do you eat it, how do you eat it, and why? How does this reflect cultural values or traditions?
- How do you greet others? Are there implicit rules for these interactions?
- What technology do you use? What role does it play in your life?
- What do you consider to be a suitable distance between persons (in an elevator, or standing in line, for example)? How does this reflect cultural norms about space and proximity?

- Select a specific day, and throughout the day try to consider and reflect on your activities, interactions, and surroundings. Pay particular attention to aspects such as:
 - What you do and why you do it
 - Social norms or expectations influencing your thoughts, behaviors, choices
 - Interactions with others (e.g., friends, family, coworkers)
 - Material objects or symbols you use and their cultural significance
- Choose three key moments or aspects of your day that stand out to you. For each, consider:
 - How do these moments reflect broader cultural patterns (i.e. individualism, consumerism, community, etc.)?

- What assumptions or values underlie your behavior or the behavior of others?
- What are the implicit rules or expectations you followed?
 - o Where do you think you learned these implicit rules/expectations?
- **Craft and submit a narrative analysis of your day (750-1000 words)** that describes and analyzes the three moments/aspects you have selected. The narrative should **define and make use of at least two anthropological concepts** from class lessons or the textbook to analyze your observations. In your analysis, you should discuss how these concepts help you understand your experiences in a new way. Finally, reflect on what you learned about your culture or yourself through this exercise. What seemed "normal" or "natural" that now feels culturally constructed? Did anything surprise you? As in all submissions, make sure to cite your sources (i.e. tell me where you found the definition for your anthropological concepts).

V. Core Assessment (36 points)

This course is part of the University Core Curriculum. In order to ensure the course is fulfilling its role, a course assessment will be given to all students. The assessment will be completed on Canvas.

VI. Ethnographic Interview and Report (200 points)

To complete this project, you will conduct an ethnographic interview with someone who is from a *different* cultural or sub-cultural background than you. It is up to you to describe how the interviewee's cultural background is different from your own (in some cases, it may be obvious, in others, less so). Face-face interviews are most common in anthropology, but you can also choose to do this interview using video conferencing technology if needed.

For this assignment, you will develop an interview questionnaire that will help you to gain information about their life. You may want to ask about your interviewee's cultural background, their childhood and life growing up, their education and work experiences, their family relationships, food practices, religion/spirituality, or other areas in which you are interested. Your goal is to approach this assignment like an anthropologist, and consider how your interviewee's specific life experiences are related to broader cultural and historical contexts.

In your paper, you will analyze the content of the interview using anthropological theories and concepts that we have discussed in class and from the textbook. You will be expected to discuss the relationship between the particular experiences of your interviewee and the broader cultural and

historical context(s) in which they happened. Remember, you need to approach this project like an anthropologist: open minded and without value judgments placed on those who are different from you.

You will turn in a **900-1100 word paper** describing your interviewee's life (175 points), **along with a copy of the interview questions that you asked your interviewee** (25 points). In the final paper, you will give a detailed description and analysis of the interview, including:

1. Brief description of the subculture your interviewee is a part of, and your positionality in relation to it (i.e. how your cultural background is different from and/or similar to your interviewee)
2. Discussion of your interviewee's life experiences within a particular cultural and historical context
3. Focused discussion of specific aspect of interviewee's life experiences based upon the content of the interview. This could include but is not limited to: your interviewee's cultural background, their childhood and life growing up, their education and work experiences, their family relationships, food practices, religion/spirituality, or other areas in which you are interested. These experiences should be specific to your interviewee!
4. At least 2 quotes from your interviewee
5. **Application of at least two anthropological concepts from the textbook, readings, and/or class meetings to analyze, interpret, and/or understand the content of the interview.** To do this well, you must first describe/define the concept itself.
6. A reflection on your experience of doing the interview. How did it feel to be the interviewer? What did you learn? Was it easier or more challenging than you thought it would be? Did you know the person before the interview? If so, how do you see that person differently after the interview?
7. In-text citations and work cited page

** Please make sure you have consent from the person before you conduct your interview, and please be respectful to your interviewee. For instance, if you can see that a topic makes them uncomfortable, discontinue that line of questioning.

NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to add, delete, or revise segments of the syllabus. Any changes in the course schedule will be announced in class and on the course webpage.

*** Paper Formatting:** All papers are to be double spaced, with 12-point font and 1-inch margins on all sides, and should contain a works cited/references page. In-text quotes and references should be properly cited and a reference page provided. You may use whichever format you are most familiar with (i.e. MLA,

APA, Chicago), but you must be consistent. If you do not know what I am talking about here, please, please, please ask me, your Instructional Assistants, or the UNT writing lab for help.

Important Dates To Remember

- 2/17: Practicing Participant Observation Assignment Due
- 3/24: A Day in the Life Analysis Due
- 4/16: Core Assessment Due
- 5/5: Ethnographic Interview and Report Assignment Due

Course Schedule and Required Readings

Section 1- Anthropology and the Study of Humanity

- 1/13: First day of class; No readings assigned
- 1/15: Douglas Raybeck "The Dawn of Interest"
- 1/20: Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 5-20

Section 2- Cultural Anthropology and the Culture Concept

- 1/22: Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 33-48
- 1/27: Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 21-31, 48-63

Section 3- Packing Your Anthropological Backpack: Theories, Methods, and Practices

- 1/29: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 65-80
2. Anthropology News- What's in Your Bag, Anthropologists?
- 2/3: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 80-95
2. Anthropology Now- Fieldnotes from Peru

2/5: Horace Miner "The Body Rituals of the Nacirema"

2/10: Edward Said- selection from "Orientalism"

Section 4- Culture, Currency, and Power: Political and Economic Systems

2/12: Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 281-298

2/17: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 298-317
2. James Suzman, Hunter-Gatherer Inequality: Why Envy
Might be Good for Us

**2/17: PRACTICING PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT
SUBMIT ON CANVAS BY 11:59PM**

2/19: Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 357-378

2/24: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 378-387
2. The Guardian- What does the Panopticon Mean in the
Age of Digital Surveillance?

Section 5- Thinking Anthropologically About...

Race, Ethnicity, and Gender

2/26: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 127-140
2. American Anthropological Association's Statement on
Race

3/3: Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 141-175

3/5: Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 187-208

3/9- 3/13

SPRING BREAK!

Language, Communication, and Culture

3/19: Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 104-123

3/24: Boroditsky "How Language Shapes Thought: The Languages We Speak Affect our Perceptions of the World"

**3/24: A DAY IN THE LIFE ANALYSIS DUE
SUBMIT ON CANVAS BY 11:59PM**

Kinship and Family

3/26: Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 249-265, 270-277

Religion, Ritual, and Symbols

3/31: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 389-404
2. Sapiens "How Did Belief Evolve?"

4/2: Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 405- 421

Section 6- Current Topics in Anthropology

Food and Culture

4/7: Roland Barthes "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption"

4/9: Grief "The Hipster in the Mirror"

The Body

4/14: Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 423-448

4/16: Paul Farmer "An Anthropology of Structural Violence"

**4/16: CORE ASSESSMENT DUE
COMPLETE ON CANVAS BY 11:59pm**

Material Culture, Art, and Museums

4/21: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 457-476
2. Cairns "Museums are Dangerous Places: How Te Papa is Challenging Colonialist History"

Environment and Sustainability

4/23: Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 328-340, 349-353

Travel and Tourism

4/28: Christine Preble- "Cruise Ship Tourism in Cozumel, Mexico: Frios Como la Naturaleza de los Gringos lo Dice"; Wrapping up; final thoughts and considerations

**5/5: ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW AND REPORT DUE
SUBMIT ON CANVAS BY 11:59PM**