

SYLLABUS

ANTH 2300.400

CULTURE AND SOCIETY

SUMMER 2025

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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 rather than Canvas email**. Be sure to include the course name or number and section (ANTH 2300.400) 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 key anthropological concepts and frameworks
- Learn and practice methodologies used by cultural anthropologists
- Become more aware of the complexity and diversity of cultures and societies within the United States and around the world
- Gain an understanding of your own experiences 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!

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](#): "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 whatever pronouns 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 8pm-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 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. YOU CAN'T LEARN IF YOU ARE HUNGRY!

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. 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>

NAVIGATING THE COURSE

This is an introductory-level course, and there are no prerequisites for prior knowledge in this field.

Some students find online courses daunting or confusing, but this course is designed to be straightforward and user-friendly. Everything that you turn in you will submit through Canvas. The structure of the course is as follows:

- The class is divided into 14 Lessons.
- Generally speaking for each Lesson, you will complete the following:
 1. Assigned readings from the textbook

2. Lesson content on Canvas (found under "Modules") that expands on and adds to the required readings
 3. 1-2 articles to read on Canvas – the links to these will be in the lessons on Canvas.
 4. One reflection discussion post with discussion question and at least one response discussion post to a classmate's submission about the materials for that Lesson (see more detail below); prompts are provided.
- Some Lessons you will complete an additional writing assignment (Current Event Analysis, Ethnographic Observation, and Ethnographic Interview, see below for details)

~ All assignments (except the final discussion post and the Ethnographic Interview assignment) will be due on Wednesdays and Sundays by 11:59 PM. However, the earlier you post your reflection discussion post, the more time your classmates will have to respond!~

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

There are no exams in this course. However, this course does require you to develop and use skills important to anthropologists, such as written and oral communication skills.

Calculating Your Grade

A total of 991 points are available in this class. To calculate your grade at any given moment, you divide the number of points you have received by the number of points possible at that point in time.

Grade Breakdown

Reflection Discussion Posts/Responses (35 points each x 13)	455 points
Ethnographic Observation, Field Notes, and Map	200 points
Current Event Analysis	100 points
Core Assessment	36 points
Ethnographic Interview and Report	200 points
Total points	991 points

ASSIGNMENTS

I. Discussion Boards: Reflection and Response Posts (35 points each)

For each reflection post, you will 1) respond to the provided prompt 2) create one original, relevant discussion question, and 3) respond to at least one of your classmates' posts. At the end of the semester, I will drop the lowest discussion board grade for each student.

Each discussion board should contain:

- One original post that is at least 300 words (20 points)
- One original, relevant discussion question that focuses on the content and/or readings for that week's lesson (see parameters below, 5 points)
- At least one discussion post in response to a classmates' post that is at least 100 words (10 points)

The audience for your discussion question will be your classmates. Keep in mind the best discussion questions will be:

Open-ended: Questions cannot be answered with yes/no or either/or

Answerable: Questions do not require extensive knowledge from outside the course, and can be answered using knowledge learned in the course versus speculation

Substantive and relevant: Questions should be related to a significant point/argument in the lesson content and/or readings, and should ask us to consider the point/argument in the context of the broader themes of this course

The goal for this assignment is to create a dialog between you and your fellow students regarding important issues and topics raised in the readings. For those who may not have participated in online discussions before, it's okay to have different opinions from others-- in fact, that's part of what can make online discussions so rich and vibrant! Just remember to address those differences in a courteous manner. If you have a different opinion or idea about something, support what you are saying with evidence from the lesson content, textbook, and/or required readings.

If a post contains offensive or disrespectful language, it will be removed and the student will receive 0 points for that week's discussion board grade. Students may not make up discussion board posts after the due date has passed unless there is a university documented emergency.

Please note that like all other assignments, all discussion posts are checked for the use of generative AI. If a discussion post is determined to be AI generated, it will receive a 0. If you believe that there is an error in a grade you receive, you are welcome to contact me to set a meeting to discuss. Ultimately, it is up to you

to demonstrate to me that you created the discussion post on your own/without use of AI assistance.

II. Ethnographic Observation, Fieldnotes, and Map Assignment (200 points)

To complete this project, you will go to a site/location of your choice for at least one hour of time-- the place you choose is up to you, so long as it is within the parameters outlined below. You will observe and participate in the activities taking place at this location, especially paying attention to the setting itself, the environment, the people and/or animals there, and anything else you might observe or sense. Try to use all of your available senses, and document all the different things that you experience and feel.

During your participant observation, you will record what you observe as "fieldnotes," which you will turn in as one part of the final assignment. You will also draw a map of the space/place. You will then use the fieldnotes and map to write a narrative description about this space/place, using in-depth description to convey your experience to the reader. Your narrative write-up should be **750-1000 words**.

You will submit **THREE documents** for points:

- Your detailed fieldnotes that you took during your observation, at least one full page (50 points)
- Drawn map of the space/place (50 points)
- A written narrative describing in detail your experience, 750-1000 words (100 points)

The written narrative should include the following elements:

1. In-depth description of the place/space, including structures, landscape elements, natural or man-made objects, the "feeling" of the place, etc.
2. 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)
3. **Use the anthropological concept of "culture" as described in class discussion 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 **key characteristics of culture (i.e. that culture is learned, taught, shared, etc)** are symbolized within your observations. To do this well, you must first define/describe the concept(s) you are using.
4. Reflections on your experience of doing this activity. For instance, what did you learn about this space/place seeing it from an anthropological point of view? Did it seem strange to be an observer? Why or why not?
5. In-text citations and a references page

Note: Due to health concerns, students are able to choose outdoor locations without other people present. In these instances, you should closely observe the environment, paying attention to specific aspects of the place including how plants, insects, and/or animals interact; the topography and design; the sights, sounds, and smells you notice; how “culture” and “nature” interact or are separated; and more.

Keep in mind, the more descriptive detail, the better! Help your reader draw a picture of your experience in their mind. 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. Current Event Analysis (100 points)

To provide an opportunity for you to put the concepts and ideas we are learning in class in conversation with events and issues happening in our world today, students will research and analyze a specific current event. By “current” I mean it should have happened within the past 5 years or so. Current Event topics can include anything related to culture (which, you will find out, is mostly everything!) including art, social movements, popular media such as film or TV, social media trends, news stories, domestic and international events, law/policy, and more. Be creative!

In your analysis, you will utilize anthropological concepts, frameworks, and/or theories learned in the class to describe the cultural *meaning or significance* of the current event.

For this assessment, you have the option of completing a written essay or recording a video presentation. Regardless of the format you select, in your submission you should do the following:

- a) Describe your current event topic
- b) Discuss the cultural and historical context for your current event
- c) Use at least one anthropological concept or theory from the textbook, readings, and/or class meetings to explain the current event’s cultural**

significance. That is, I want to see you make a connection between your current event topic and something you have learned in this class. To do this well, you will need to identify and describe/define the concept you are using.

d) Offer your very insightful and critical analysis of the event

e) If you choose the video presentation mode, you might include visual aids to help convey information

f) Provide in-text citations and a references page

Written essays should be 700-850 words

Video recordings should be at least 6 minutes

Try to select topics that raise your curiosity or interest—it will make this assignment much more interesting for you!

III. Core Assessment (36 points)

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

V. 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). You can choose to do this interview using video conferencing technology due to COVID restrictions/health concerns.

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 report, you will analyze the content of the interview using anthropological theories and concepts that we have discussed in class and that you have learned through your readings. You will be expected to discuss the relationship between the particular experiences of your interviewee and the broader cultural context(s) in which they exist. 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. If used, in-text quotes and references should be properly cited. 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 the Professor, your Instructional Assistant, or the UNT writing lab for help.**

COURSE SCHEDULE

Dates To Remember

Every Wednesday and Sunday: Reflection and Response Discussion Posts

6/4: Extra Credit Syllabus Quiz

6/22: Ethnographic Observation, Fieldnotes, and Map Assignment

7/9: Current Event Analysis Assignment

7/20: Core Assessments

7/25: Ethnographic Interview and Report

6/2- 6/4 Lesson 1: Introduction to the Course	To Read: No required readings, familiarize yourself with the Canvas course webpage	To Turn In: DUE 6/4 1. Lesson 1 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts 2. EXTRA CREDIT! Syllabus Quiz
6/5- 6/8 Lesson 2: Introduction to Anthropology	To Read: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 5-31 2. Raybeck "The Dawn of Interest" 3. Watters "The Americanization of Mental Illness"	To Turn In: DUE 6/8 1. Lesson 2 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts
6/9- 6/11 Lesson 3: The Concept of Culture	To Read: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 33-63 2. DeLuca "Why Don't Westerners Eat Off One Plate"	To Turn In: DUE 6/11 1. Lesson 3 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts

6/12- 6/15 Lesson 4: Ethnographic Fieldwork	To Read: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 80- 95 2. Miner "The Body Rituals of the Nacirema" 3. Nordling "Who Gets to Study Whom?"	To Turn In: DUE 6/15 1. Lesson 4 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts
6/16- 6/18 Lesson 5: History and Theories in Anthropology	To Read: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 65-80 2. Edward Said- selection from "Orientalism"	To Turn In: DUE 6/18 1. Lesson 5 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts
6/19- 6/22 Lesson 6: Economic Systems	To Read: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 281-300, 305-314 3. Smith "Cell Phones, Sharing, and Social Status in an African Society"	To Turn In: DUE 6/22 1. Lesson 6 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts 2. ETHNOGRAPHIC OBSERVATION ASSIGNMENT
6/23- 6/25 Lesson 7: Politics, Social Order, and Social Control	To Read: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 357-387 2. Suzman "Hunter-Gatherer Inequality: Why Envy Might Be Good for Us" Suggested: The Guardian "What does the Panopticon Mean in the Age of Digital Surveillance?"	To Turn In: DUE 6/25 1. Lesson 7 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts
6/26- 6/29 Lesson 8: Sex and Gender	To Read: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 187- 217 2. Goel "Hijras- India's Third Gender Rises Again"	To Turn In: DUE 6/29 1. Lesson 8 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts

6/30- 7/2 Lesson 9: Race and Ethnicity	To Read: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 127-155, 161-166, 178-185 2. AAA Statement on Race 3. Delgado and Stefancic "Introduction to Critical Race Theory"	To Turn In: DUE 7/2 1. Lesson 9 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts
7/3- 7/6: HOLIDAY/ NO CLASS!		
7/7- 7/9 Lesson 10: Culture Change and Culture Tradition	To Read: 1. Selection from Eller "Cultural Anthropology: Global Forces, Local Lives" pgs. 215-232; 274-293 2. Lasco "The Dark Side of Skin Whitening" 3. Eriksen "How Globalization has Broken the Chain of Responsibility"	To Turn In: DUE 7/9 1. Lesson 10 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts 2. CURRENT EVENT ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT
7/10- 7/13 Lesson 11: Kinship and Marriage	To Read: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 249- 277 2. Nanda "Arranged Marriages in India"	To Turn In: DUE 7/13 1. Lesson 11 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts
7/14- 7/16 Lesson 12: Language and Communication	To Read: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 104-123 2. Boroditsky "How Language Shapes Thought: The Languages We Speak Affect our Perceptions of the World" 3. Arnold "Can an iPhone App Help Save an Endangered Language?"	To Turn In: DUE 7/16 1. Lesson 12 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts

7/17- 7/20 Lesson 13: Religion and Magic	To Read: 1. Essentials of Cultural Anthropology pgs. 389- 421 2. Del Guerico "The Secrets of Haiti's Living Dead"	To Turn In: DUE 7/20 1. Lesson 13 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts 2. CORE ASSESSMENTS DUE (3 COMPONENTS)
7/21- 7/23 Lesson 14: Museums and Material Culture	To Read: 1. Selection from "Material Culture" in Asking Questions about Anthropology 2. Kahn "Not Really Pacific Voices: Politics of Representation in Collaborative Museum Exhibits" 3. Cairns "Museums are Dangerous Places: How Te Papa is Challenging Colonialist History"	To Turn In: DUE 7/23 1. Lesson 14 Reflection and Response Discussion Posts
7/25: Final Project Due: Ethnographic Interview and Report		