

# ANTH 3101 | ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CULTURE AND SOCIETY

**Instructor: Dr. Susan Squires** (*she/her/hers*)

Professor, [Department of Anthropology](#)

**Office Hours:** By appointment

**Email:** Susan.Squires@UNT.edu

**Instructional Assistants (IAs) will be listed on Canvas**

## Course Description

Shifting American cultural values, emergent and contested identities, and complex social institutions undergird some of the most significant social issues in America today.

Oriented around the core concept of culture and cultural groups, the course is designed to introduce us to anthropological frameworks for understanding cultural diversity, and to develop our critical thinking skills for identifying, describing and explaining the social complexities of American (U.S.) culture.

Ethnographic case studies combine with current events to orient us to the intricacies of cultural diversity, while discussion and critical reflection help to raise our awareness and broaden our perspective of lives and livelihoods in the United States. Special time and attention will be devoted to mainstream and subcultural identities, as well as institutional and structural complexities in this pluralist, secular, nation-state.

## Learning Objectives

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

1. Identify introductory anthropological terms and concepts as they apply to culture and society in the United States.
2. Evaluate social tropes or “stereotypes”, normative assumptions, and multiple perspectives of culture and society in the U.S. using anthropological terms and concepts.
3. Increase sensitivity to major aspects and characteristics of social issues in the U.S., causal and correlative factors, associated issues, and the nature of public and private organization addressing these issues.
4. Reflect on relationships between small-scale and large-scale social organization in the U.S. using anthropological terms and concepts.
5. Establish and refine skills for discussing current and sometimes controversial issues in U.S. culture using anthropological terms and concepts.
6. Illustrate growth in written communication skills over the course of the semester.
7. Demonstrate improved critical thinking skills over the course of the semester.

## Required materials

***There is no textbook for this course. All required readings, films, and other media are embedded in CANVAS.***

**Current Events-based course content:** Media-based course content boldly encounters realities of lived experience in the United States. The course designer has done due diligence to fact check news sources and material presented in the modules. That said, there are always ways to spin the news. Although residents in the U.S. may participate in many facets of “American” culture, the ideal and the real America are drawn into sharp contrast by reconsidering culture and society in the United States through the holistic lens of Anthropology. To this end, emphasis on critical cultural relativism and social equality offers a multi-focal framework through which to situate America’s sociohistorical past, recognize continuing cultural patterns of the present, and delve into interconnected social issues of the contemporary “American” experience.

## Technical Support

Student Helpdesk: 940-565-2324 | helpdesk@unt.edu

## Technical Skills Requirements

To be successful in this course, students will need to be able to:

- Access the internet
- Navigate Canvas
- Navigate the UNT Library
- Send and receive email through Canvas and/or through Microsoft Outlook
- Create, save and post Microsoft Word documents to Canvas
- Post and reply to discussion boards
- Open and print pdf files, using free Adobe Acrobat Reader

It is the student’s responsibility to ensure they familiarize themselves with the Hardware and Software Requirements for CANVAS as stipulated in the module:

Look at “Online Course Technology and Skills” from the Module “Start Here” as well as conduct a CANVAS browser check.

## Course Structure

This course takes place 100% online. During the Spring, we will spend roughly one week on each module.

The 13 Modules are grouped into three main themes:

- What is America/n?
- Identity and Culture Groups
- Institutions and Social Structures

With those broader themes in mind, our task is to read and work through the content of that week’s module. *Start early! Do not wait until the last minute, because there is A LOT of content.*

## Content – Course Elements

No books are required, as all lessons contain essential anthropological concepts, definitions and frameworks needed to understand the Module in relation to the broader course theme. In addition to written content, embedded in the modules we will explore the following course **elements**. Students will be expected to incorporate at least two course **elements** in each assignment.

- Exercises
- Videos (ranging from short YouTube videos, news stories, and TedTalks to full-length documentaries)
- Articles
- Links to external resources that help to supplement content

All written course content is required reading unless noted otherwise. Embedded course elements will be designated as "required" or "recommended". The required elements are essential for your assignments; the recommended elements are, well - recommended!

## Course Assessments

Each Module contains 1-2 assessments, including

- **Group Discussions - Group Discussions** will cover salient themes and materials (150-200 word post/100-150 word response x2).
- **Critical Reflection/Responses** – About every other Module, you will be asked to submit a short (250 word) **Critical Reflection/Response** entry over a specific topic within the weekly Modules, and discuss its relation to the course theme.
- **Engaged Anthropology Assignment** - At the end of the semester, you will submit an **Engaged Anthropology Assignment** to satisfy the civic engagement component of American Culture and Society. These assignments require you to present your work in a 2-minute recorded presentation. If you are unable to record your presentation, you may submit a 500 word essay instead.
- **Core Questions** – These 2 questions will be your final assignments of the semester. They are questions required by UNT since this class meets the Core requirement of a social sciences/civic engagement class. Your answers will be graded only based on whether you submitted the required number of sentences or not.

The COURSE SCHEDULE posted under Modules “Course Essentials” outlines the assignments due each week of the course.

## Prerequisites

This is a 3000-level, intermediate Anthropology course. Although, there are no required prerequisites for this course, basic [UNT CORE requirements \(Links to an external site.\)](#) including but not limited to ANTH 1010 or ANTH 2300 are highly recommended.

## Getting Started!

Step 1: Click on the Modules Tab

Step 2: Click on the “Start Here” Module to read over the basics of how CANVAS courses work.

Step 3: Click on the “Introduction” Module to know a little bit more about the course, your Instructor, and your Graduate Student Instructional Assistants (IAs). “Course Essentials” provides you with a course schedule and a calendar.

Step 4: Click on the “Week 1: Defining the Basics” Module and get to work!

If you have any questions, NOW is the time to get in touch with Professor Paschal or your IAs!

## **Assessments and Scoring**

### **Discussion Forums (13 @ 20 points each) 260 points**

Due: First post due on Friday, all posts due Sundays (check schedule for dates)

We will participate in weekly small group discussions, designed to engage with the learning objectives for that module. Discussion submissions will be graded on the basis of the quality of engagement with both 1) the content and 2) their discussion group peers.

***\*There will be no extensions granted on discussion posts and late-posts will not be accepted.*** If there is an excused reason for the absence of a discussion post then an EXEMPTION will be recorded.\*

***Discussions are due every week of the course and are due no later than Sunday night at 11:59pm.***

### **Critical Reflection and Response (5 @ 50 points each) 250 points**

Due: ***Sundays at 11:59 pm for the following Modules: M2, M4, M6, M8, M11 (Check the calendar for specific dates)*** Critical Reflections are in addition to the discussion posts for that module.

About every other Module, we will upload one short 250-300 word essay that addresses a specific element of the Module. CRRs are designed to practice pinpointing a main thesis argument to then expand upon and engage with in a thematic essay. The focus of CRRs is on concepts and main ideas. Short papers are an exercise in engaging with ideas in a more complex and anthropological perspective.

### **Engaged Anthropology Presentation - 1 @ 100 points**

Due: ***See Syllabus for Due Dates***

This benchmark presentation will be a personalized and creative application of the course learning objectives. At end-of-semester, video presentations will be submitted in an accessible presentation format. The presentation considers all three major course themes and situates them within a greater context of anthropological thought.

### **CORE Questions – 20 points (10 points each)**

Due: ***See Syllabus for Due Dates***

These questions are a requirement of the University since this course meets a core requirement. Each question is worth 10 points. You will get full credit as long as you answer the questions with about 5 reasonable sentences.

**Total points possible in this course: 630**

## Grading

All grades will be issued on a letter basis. Here is an achievement scale for each letter designation:

- >567 points - A: 90-100% (Outstanding, excellent work. Performs well above the minimum criteria.)
- >504 points - B: 80-89% (Good, impressive work. Performs above the minimum criteria.)
- >441 points - C: 70-79% (Solid, college-level work. Meets the criteria of the assignment.)
- >378 points - D: 60-69% (Below average work. Fails to meet the minimum criteria.)
- <378 points - F: 59 and below (Fails to complete the assignment.)

## Expectations, Requirements, and Responsibilities

1. Access and follow all course instructions found in the Modules area of the course CANVAS page.
2. Read/view all required and (as much recommended as possible) material; including but not limited to Module content videos, and assigned readings such as journal articles, pdf files, and web articles.
3. Participate in frequent group discussions using the CANVAS discussion forum, upload short thematic essays or other required content, and complete one benchmark project in a timely manner.
4. **Complete original work.** Do not copy others' discussion board posts, and if you refer to someone else's idea's, give that person credit. For example, open your post or response by saying "as Zelda pointed out, ..." Importantly: Use of open source, generative AI such as Chat GPT is unacceptable and will result in a zero for the assignment. We have seen all forms of responses. If you use AI, we will know.

## Grade-related Policies

### Late Work

**Discussions:** Late submissions on discussions **are not accepted** without a University-excused absence because once the discussion board closes, participants can no longer interact or respond to one another. Extra credit opportunities may be made available throughout the semester so watch the course announcements. **I'm very serious about this!**

If you have a legitimate University-excused absence, you will be issued an "excused" score in Canvas.

**Critical Reflection/Response entries and Engaged Anthropology Presentations:** Late submissions of Critical Reflection and Engaged Anthropology work will be accepted and no penalty shall be imposed if they are accompanied with any of the following at the time of submission:

- 1) Medical documentation (signed by a medical professional);
- 2) ODA Accommodations Letter that specifically lists late submission as an accommodation;
- 3) Dean's Memo.

Missing discussion posts accompanied by any of the aforementioned documentation will be granted an EXEMPTION.

Travel (work, vacation, moving, etc.) for any reason other than a University-approved activity will **not** be considered excused absence.

### **Extensions**

Extension requests for Critical Reflection and Engaged Anthropology activities without documentation will be considered if requested in writing (via email) to Prof. Squires within 24 hours of the due date of the assessment. There are no extensions for discussion posts. **Late penalty may be assessed for any unexcused late work in the amount of ½ letter grade per day.** Late work must be completed within one week of the due date.

### **Turnaround Time**

We will do due diligence to submit grades for written assignments within 1 week of when they are due when turned in on time.

### **Grade Disputes**

Grading of written assignments are completed by Instructional Assistants, who are Master's Candidates in Applied Anthropology. Prof. Squires will re-grade any assessment upon the request of the student. However, please understand that she may determine to give you a lower grade than the grade your IA originally posted. The grade assigned by Prof. Paschal is final.

## **Course Policies**

### **Assignment Policy**

Assignments will be due ON THE DATE ASSIGNED by 11:59pm Central Time. All work submitted for credit must be ORIGINAL works created by the student uniquely for this class, for the current semester. If a student is re-taking ANTH 3101 then they must seek the Instructor's approval *prior* to re-submitting work otherwise it will be considered plagiarism. **In other words, no plagiarism of other student's work, any published work (books, articles, websites, etc.) without citing them or by using AI!** I want to see your own words.

Papers submitted via any other medium (i.e. emailed) will not be accepted. Submission portals on CANVAS close at 11:59pm on the night that assignments are due. *Plan to submit well before the deadline in order to account for technical difficulties. Technical difficulties do not constitute an "excused" reason for late submission of assignments.*

### **Communicating with Your Instructional Team**

**Your first point of contact should always be with your IA.** Email your designated IA if you have questions regarding your grade on an assessment. Similarly, if you are having trouble understanding a module's content or an assignment feel free to set up a ZOOM appointment with your IA. If after touching base with your IA you feel that you still have questions/concerns, or if your issue is with your IA then you should reach out to Prof. Paschal via email in order to schedule a ZOOM appointment. Please practice Netiquette in all communications and interactions.

The following require communication with the instructor, Dr. Johnson (and not your IA):

- a. Extension requests
- b. Re-Grade requests

- c. Extenuating Circumstances/Concerns (cheating, harassment, health, etc.)
- d. ODA Requests
- e. Requests for Incomplete (INC)
- f. Concerns about the nature of the course material (bias, sensitivity, equity)

**Student Academic Integrity Policy: PLEASE READ!!**

*Here is the UNT Department of Anthropology Academic Integrity policy:*

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/>).

*Here are some specific standards for this class:*

- Any student suspected of cheating in this course will receive at the very least a 0 on the assignment or up to an F in the course.
- First-time student offenders who commit academic dishonesty will receive a zero on the assignment in which academic dishonesty was found. Students suspected of multiple academic dishonesty offenses will be provided the opportunity for a hearing; a guilty finding will merit an automatic “F” in the course.
- If a student is suspected of using generative AI, the burden of proof to show originally sourced material is on the student. **Using more than 20% generative AI is considered cheating in this course!**
- Using a “test” post to open the Discussion Board prior to posting your original discussion post will be considered cheating and will result in a “0” for that assignment. Repeated offenses will result in a finding of academic dishonesty and potentially an F in this course.
- A finding of academic dishonesty within this class may result in a report of academic integrity violation to be filed against the student with UNT at which time the student will have an opportunity to appeal the decision according to UNT’s appeal process. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.
- Virtual study groups including, but not limited to, platforms such as CANVAS, Group Me, discord, etc. must include an IA as a member. Any student participating in either a virtual, or in-person, group may be reported to the academic integrity office and sanctioned with an “F” in the course if there is cause to question academic integrity within the group. This implicates any and every student who is, or has been, a participant in the group, whether or not they are directly/indirectly, or actively/passively, involved in the potential academic integrity offense.

## **UNT Policies**

### **Technology Support**

Part of working in the online environment involves dealing with the inconveniences and frustration that can arise when technology breaks down or does not perform as expected. Here at UNT we have

a [Student Help Desk \(Links to an external site.\)](#) that you can contact for help with Canvas or other technology issues:

**Phone:** 940-565-2324

**Email:** [helpdesk@unt.edu](mailto:helpdesk@unt.edu)

Current list of [Student Help Desk hours \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

For additional support, visit this [Canvas Technical Help \(Links to an external site.\)](#) web page.

### **Academic Integrity Policy**

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

### **ODA/ADA Policy**

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website [disability.unt.edu](http://disability.unt.edu).

### **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.

### **Acceptable Student Behavior**

Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct ([Links to an external site.](#)). The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

The Dean of Students Office ([Links to an external site.](#)) enforces the Code of Student Conduct ([Links to an external site.](#)). The Code explains what conduct is prohibited, the process the DOS uses to review reports of alleged misconduct by students, and the sanctions that can be assigned. When students may have violated the Code they meet with a representative from the Dean of Students Office to discuss the alleged misconduct in an educational process.

## **Important Notice for F-1 Students Taking Distance Education Courses**

To read detailed Immigration and Customs Enforcement regulations for F-1 students taking online courses, please visit the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations (Links to an external site.)website. The specific portion concerning distance education courses is located at Title 8 CFR 214.2 Paragraph (f)(6)(i)(G).

The paragraph reads:

(G) For F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken on-line or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An on-line or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no on-line or distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

## **Sexual Assault Prevention**

UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. The Survivor Advocates can be reached at [SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu](mailto:SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu) or by calling the Dean of Students Office at 940-565-2648. Visit Title IX Student Information (Links to an external site.) for more resources.

## **Undocumented Students**

Please see [UNT'S Resources for DACA Students](#) for helpful information!

## **Academic Support Services**

- The [UNT Academic Resource Center \(Links to an external site.\)](#), which provides links to the bookstore, registration and advising information, tuition information, financial aid, and more.
- The [UNT Academic Success Center \(Links to an external site.\)](#), which offers academic support services and free individual tutoring.
- [UNT Writing Lab \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

## **Student Services**

- [Counseling and Testing Services \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- [Student Affairs Care Team \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- [Student Health and Wellness Center \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- [Student Legal Services \(Links to an external site.\)](#)
- [UNT Food Pantry \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

## **Class Attendance**

Students are expected to participate in online classes regularly and to abide by the attendance/participations policy established for the course. It is important that you communicate with the professor and the instructional team prior to being absent, so you, the professor, and the instructional team can discuss and mitigate the impact of the absence on your attainment of course learning goals. Please inform the professor and instructional team if you are unable to attend class meetings because you are ill, in mindfulness of the health and safety of everyone in our community.

## **Student Health and Wellness Center**

If you are experiencing any [symptoms of COVID-19](#) or [other illnesses](#), please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or [askSHWC@unt.edu](mailto:askSHWC@unt.edu)) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Hotline at 844-366-5892 or [COVID@unt.edu](mailto:COVID@unt.edu) for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure. While attendance is an important part of succeeding in this class, your own health, and those of others in the community, is more important.

***Celebrate accomplishments.*** We will take time to celebrate and mark our collective class accomplishments and the individual accomplishments that are significant to you. Any kind of achievement during an uncertain time is a testament to your ability to persevere and our collective ability to do it together.

***Take time to thrive.*** It is important that individually and collectively we take time to take care of our minds, bodies, and spirits. If you are not feeling well and are struggling to do the work for this class, **let me know so that we can come up with alternatives.** Do not push yourself beyond your limits; invest in self-care and self-preservation. Take time to do things that nurture your body, mind, and soul.

**SO GLAD TO HAVE YOU HERE THIS  
SPRING!**

**LOOKING FORWARD TO AN AWESOME  
SEMESTER!**

**-Dr. Squires**