Cadets! Start your engines! We are taking a trip across time and space! You are entering the intriguing, exciting and often complex world of Cultural Anthropology. The discipline of anthropology is tremendously diverse encompassing elements of political science, sociology, economics, linguistics, archeology and psychology. Cultural Anthropology differs from these other disciplines by focusing on people and explores how a group’s cultural patterns shape behaviors. By its holistic and comparative nature, a goal of anthropology is to understand human nature and social interactions. Anthropologists emphasize that culture is a learned condition that underlies people’s belief systems and behaviors. Focusing on people (societies), anthropologists seek to explain cultural differences and the impact of culture on politics, economics, ritual, art, gender, religion etc. Applied anthropology then seeks to solve contemporary social problems, such as ethnic conflicts, using anthropological perspectives and evidence.

During the semester, you will learn both the basic and applied aspects of cultural anthropology. Through the hallmark of anthropology, fieldwork, you will be able to explore a domain of cultural anthropology within your own particular culture, West Point. Cultural anthropology allows us to look critically at the concept of "human nature" by examining its importance in human adaptation. For you as future army officers, it is crucial to understand other cultures in order to formulate policy and work overseas. Cadets will learn to approach societies that at first glance might appear bizarre as ones which are meaningful. This course builds on cultural concepts introduced in several other courses, including SS307, International Relations, SS366, Comparative Politics, and EV365, Cultural and Political Geography. In a world of constant change, increasing globalization and the information revolution, it is imperative to understand that cultures different from our own are not necessarily wrong. As a future Army officer, this is a vital skill.

II. Course Objectives

As the only anthropology class offered at West Point, this course is designed to give you a general overview of the discipline of cultural anthropology. You should come to appreciate the diversity of human cultures and the interrelation of political and economic systems, social organizations and religious groups. As you gain an "anthropologist's perspective," you will be able to integrate all of your previous social
science courses and various views of society. The course should prove to be very exciting and rewarding as it allows you to “travel and live” in many other cultures and lets you explore your own in a way you never have before. Additionally, understanding how to interact in other cultures and assess them not by your standards, but within their cultural context will make you a more effective leader. A simple review of recent deployment patterns reinforces the point that today’s military must be prepared to operate effectively in a host of non-traditional situations. This skill will serve you well not only in overseas assignments, but also in your day-to-day interaction with American soldiers who come from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The primary course objective for SS381 is for you, as a future Army officer, to gain a greater understanding of other cultures and thus interact more effectively with others, both within and outside of the military. Specifically, by the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Think critically about general concepts in the discipline of cultural anthropology, along with its comparative and holistic nature.
- Describe, analyze and explain cultural variation using a several theories in cultural anthropology in combination with empirical evidence drawn from fieldwork methodology and secondary sources.
- Read critically to understand the various interpretations of “culture,” including concepts of race and ethnicity and culture’s role in ethnic conflict.
- Use critical thinking methods appropriate to the interpretation of anthropological theory to analyze and evaluate the ways in which various societies approach society and the environment.
- Critically evaluate the role of applied anthropology to solve current day issues and its use for military officers of the 21st century.
- Communicate clear and effective analysis and arguments about issues in anthropology both verbally and in writing. (West Point writing center) https://www.usma.edu/wpwp/SitePages/Home.aspx

III. Course Questions:

To achieve our objectives, we will focus upon the following major questions:

**How do cultural systems develop?**

**What explains cultural variation?**

**How do cultural systems, including social, economic and political institutions, impact human and state behavior?**

The course is broken down into several blocks, each examining a key question.

**A. Introduction: What is culture?**
The first segment of our course deals with a general overview of the concepts and issues of anthropology. We will explore the scope of anthropology, its methodology and then continue to a discussion of how anthropologists carry out fieldwork. By examining the problems faced by anthropologists in the field, we can assess obstacles to understanding the culture and behavior of other people. One of the key components of anthropology is the concept of “culture.” We will study this concept in depth, along with its controversial component of race. The theme of “nature versus nurture” is underscored throughout the course. Within this section, we will also reflect on American culture and its relationship to U.S. military culture.

B. Adaptive Strategies: How do people use culture to survive?
The second part of the course examines various societies’ economic adaptation to diverse geographical and historical settings. Because of the interconnection of the many disciplines mentioned above, we will discuss how a change in one domain of society will affect another. For example, how does a technological innovation influence the social structure within a society? If the Army Corps of Engineers is tasked to build a road in Afghanistan, should it consider the village through which the road passes? Does the road disrupt a certain lifestyle? How do you resettle the villagers without causing an unreasonable amount of upheaval? Many of the missions for the Army of the future require a comprehension of the cultural context in which it operates. This section also focuses on how various cultures cooperate in order to facilitate adaptation. Social organization may be based on a variety of connections that are culturally constructed including kinship ties, marriage and gender roles.

C. Conflict and Resolution: How do we solve the problem of disorder?
The third block of the class explains the political organization of different societies and offers an anthropological view on disorder. Since most societies use symbolism, religion and ritual as tools of social and political control, we will assess their role in maintaining order.

D. From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict: How does culture contribute to ethnic conflict?
Many of the conflicts to which the U.S. Army responds are between groups of different ethnic or religious backgrounds. To what degree is culture a factor in the initiation or the exacerbation of these wars? We look at cultural origins, sustaining factors, and possible solutions to ethnic conflict, focusing in particular on the Kurds, Rwanda and Israel.

E. Applied Anthropology: How does an anthropological perspective prepare us to be better leaders?
Globalization affects all societies and cultures as economies become interconnected and improving technologies break down barriers of time, space, and limited knowledge. In this section, we will analyze whether development can be viewed as progress. Industrialization and increasingly complex economic systems have led to the growth of devastating ecological problems. Can we learn from other small-scale cultures how to mitigate the effects of rapid industrialization? As leaders, realizing culture’s inherent role in state decision-making allows us to
better assess ourselves as well as another state’s actions. The course concludes with a
discussion of the part that cultural anthropology can play in the 21st century,
emphasizing its role in solving many of today’s complex problems.

F. Case Study: What have we learned about ourselves? Presentations about the
“Tribe on the Hudson.” These comparative case studies will focus on that complex
society in the Hudson Valley. Cadets will present their findings on a particular aspect
of West Point culture while putting it in the context of anthropology.

IV. Course Requirements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mini-Fieldwork</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>50 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelim I</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>50 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prelim II</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>200 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>150 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>150 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 100% 1000 points

You are also required to be prepared daily with news pertaining to anthropology. Be
sure to check your e-mail daily! You are responsible for keeping up with any
changes!

V. Required Readings

SS381 Cultural Anthropology (The book contains Conrad Phillip Kottak, Mirror for
Humanity: A Concise Introduction to Cultural Anthropology 10th edition (McGraw
Hill). Referred to as Anthro
The Table of Contents for the Kottak Book can be found on pg. 14.
The Table of contents for the Angeloni articles can be found on pg. 328.

You will have both the paper and electronic version of the Kottak. For chapters and
articles in the book, I will either list the chapter number or the first page of the article.
Unless I list specific pages, you are responsible for the entire chapter/article.

Other readings will be list as Blackboard or sent via email.
If there is a mistake in the syllabus or you do not have access to BB, you must
email/text me immediately. With that said, you are ALWAYS responsible for doing
the reading.
VI. Lesson Plan

A. Introduction to Anthropology: Learning about Culture

Lsn 1- (Monday, Aug 21): **Introduction**
What is Anthropology?
What is Cultural Anthropology?
Why should this matter to Army Officers?
**Readings:** Anthro-Kottak: Chapter 1-pg. 27
Blackboard-Simmons, *Where Fat is a Mark of Beauty*. p. 135.
Film Clip (in class): Culture and the Human Body

Lsn 2 - (Wed, Aug 23): **The Concept of Culture**
How do anthropologists define “culture?”
How does anthropology help us understand our own and other cultures?
What is ethnocentrism?
**Readings:** Anthro-Kottak: Chapter 2, pg. 43
Anthro: *Body Ritual Among the Nacirema*, p. 509
Blackboard-Mcfate: *The Utility of Military Culture*

Lsn 3 (Fri, Aug 25) Reading Day-1

Lsn 4 (Tues, Aug 29): **The Debate between Cultural Relativism & Universal Rights**
What is cultural relativism?
Are there universal values?
**Discussion:** Female Circumcision
**Readings:** Kottak: re-read 56-59
Blackboard-Donnelly, Cultural Relativism and Universal Human Rights, 400-409 Blackboard-Brown, *Cultural Relativism* 363-370
Blackboard-Shweder-Female Genital Mutilation
Blackboard: Abdelshahid-Diversity-Female Circumcision

Lsn 5 (Thurs, Aug 31) **The Concept of Culture: Nature vs. Nurture**
What is the relationship between race and culture?
Are ethnicity and race biological categories?
How does one’s view of race affect political decisions?
**Readings:** Anthro-Kottak, pp 231-256
Lsn 6 (Tues, Sept 5) **American Values and Culture**
What are the core American values?
Do these represent the ideals or realities?
How would you describe American culture? Is there one common culture or several?

**Readings:**
Blackboard: Mucha, *Outsider’s View of Culture*
Blackboard-Seymour Lipset, *American Exceptionalism*
Blackboard-Gmelch, *Pickup Basketball Meets Jenken*

Lsn 7 (Thurs, Sept 7) Reading Day- 2

Lsn 8- (Mon, Sept 11): **The History of Theories in Anthropology: An Overview**
How have anthropologists explained cultural variation?

**Readings:**
Blackboard: Ember-History of Theory in Cultural Anthropology
Blackboard: Salzman, “Thinking Theoretically”

Lsn 9 (Weds, Sept 13) **Research and Fieldwork in Anthropology**
How do anthropologists collect their information?
How does one study “culture?”
What are the aims of fieldwork and ethnography?
What are the problems faced by people in the field?
How do anthropologists use scientific methodology?

**Readings:**
Anthro-Kottak: Chapter 3. p. 64.
Anthro-Lee, Eating Christmas in the Kalahari, p. 339
Anthro-Sterk, Tricking and Tripping: Fieldwork on Prostitution, p. 343.
Blackboard: Robin O’Brien and Patricia Rice: *Using Science to think Anthropologically*

**Film clip:** Images of Culture: Firefighters

**B: Survival, Adaptation and Variation: How do people use culture to survive?**

Lsn 10 (Fri, Sep 15) Reading Day- 3

**Paper prelim 1 due Monday, September 18 at 1700 over email.**

Lsn 11 - (Tues, Sep 19) **Communication, Language and Culture**
What is the importance of communication?
How do people communicate?
How is language structured?
How does language influence perception and value formation?
How does language reflect culture or how does culture reflect language?

**Readings:** Anthro, Chapter 4, p.82
Anthro-De Lange, “My Two Minds,” p.380
Blackboard: I Can’t Even Open my Mouth
Blackboard: Boroditsky-How Language Shapes Thought
Blackboard: Deutscher: Does Your Language Shape How You Think?

**Film:** Images of Culture: Language

Lsn 12- (Thurs, Sep 21) Reading Day-4

**Mini-fieldwork due Friday, Sept 22 over email NLT 1700**

Lsn 13 - (Mon, Sep 25) **Subsistence Strategies and Economic Systems**
What is the relationship between cultural and environmental variation?
How are food-getting strategies related to culture and social life?
How do societies produce, distribute and consume goods?
How do different cultures develop various economic systems to survive?
How are economics and the development of various types of social and political systems related?

**Readings:** Anthro-Kottak: Chapter 5.
Blackboard: Reciprocity and the Power of Giving
**Film clip:** Images of Culture: Economics and Gender

Lsn 14- (Wed, Sep 27) **Stratification: Class and Gender**
What are egalitarian, rank and class societies?
Why does stratification emerge?
Is there a difference between biology and gender?
How do gender roles differ in the various types of societies?
How do anthropologists view gender roles?

**Readings:** Blackboard: Lavenda: 76-86
Blackboard: Stratification-Ember
Blackboard: Harris: Life Without Chiefs
Blackboard: Ember-Gender: 172-175
Annual-The Berdache Tradition
Annual-Hijra,

Lsn 15 (Fri, Sep 29) Reading Day-5

Lsn 16 (Tues, Oct 3) **Gender Stratification**
What are some explanations as to why a gender hierarchy exists?
Would you expect female-male difference in personality to disappear in a society with complete gender equality in the workplace?
How does technology affect the division of labor?

**Readings:** Blackboard: Ember-Gender 175-186
Blackboard: Ernestine Friedl, Society and Sex Roles
Blackboard: Anthony King, Women in Combat
Lsn 17- (Thurs, Oct 5) **Marriage**
What are some of the universal functions of marriage?
Why have various types of marriage developed?
Why have various rules of marriage developed?
**Readings:** Anthro-Kottak: 167-183
Blackboard: Ember, Marriage
Annual: :When Brothers Share a Wife
Annual: Arranging a Marriage in India
**Film clip:** When Brothers Share a Wife

Lsn 18- (Tues, Oct 10) **Kinship, Family and Residence**
On what basis is society organized socially and politically?
What role does kinship play in non-state and industrialized societies?
Why does kinship provide the main structure of social action in noncommercial societies?
Is the concept of family culturally constructed?
**Readings:** Annual-Kottak: pg. 157-167
Blackboard: Ember 206-211, 212-227
Blackboard: *The Kibbutz Family*
**Film:** Images of Culture: Gender, Family, Descent

Lsn 19- (Thurs, Oct 12) **Reading Day-6**

Lsn 20- (Mon, Oct 16) Midterm

**C: Order, Conflict and Resolution: How do cultures solve the problem of disorder?**

Lsn 21 (Wed, Oct 18) **Maintaining Order: Religion and Belief Systems**
Why did religion arise?
What role does religion play in society?
How do religious beliefs help adapt to changes in the environment or economic system?
How does a cross-cultural examination help us to understand the role of religion?
**Readings:** (Blackboard)-Ember-Religion

Lsn 22- (Friday, Oct 20) **Maintaining Order: Rituals and Symbols**
What social and political purpose do rituals serve?
How does symbolism aid in maintaining order within a given society?
**Readings:** Blackboard: Gmelch,Baseball Magic
Blackboard, *Behind the Veil*
Discussion: Clothing as symbolism
Lsn 23 (Tues, Oct 24) Maintaining Order: Rituals and Rites of passage
What are the stages of “rites of passage?”
What is the function of these rites?
Readings: Blackboard: *The Canadian Airborne*
Blackboard-Deflem-Ritual, Anti-Structure and Religion

Lsn 24 (Thurs, Oct 26) **Reading Day-7**

Friday October 27: Prelim 2 due over email NLT 1700

D: What is the role of culture in ethnic conflict?

Lsn 25 (Mon, Oct 30) **Reading Day-8**

Lsn 26 (Wed, Nov 1): **Ethnicity and Conflict**
Is conflict between cultures inevitable?
What causes ethnicity to crystallize into conflict?
**Readings:** Blackboard: Anthony Oberschall, *The Manipulation of Ethnicity*.
Second reading-TBD

Lsn 27 (Fri, Nov 3) **Iraq-Kurds**
**Readings:** TBD

Lsn 28 (Tues, Nov 7) **Rwanda**
**Readings:** Badru, Ethnic Conflict and State Formation, pp 149-150, 164-168
Cohen, Fifty Years of Ethnic Conflict on Steroids.
Newbury, Background to Genocide: Rwanda.

Lsn 29 (Thurs, Nov 9) **Israel**
**Readings:** TBD

Lsn 30 (Tues, Nov 14) **Resolving Ethnic Conflict**
Is it possible to resolve ethnic conflict?
Can anthropology offer solutions to ethnic conflict?
**Readings:** Blackboard: Chaim Kaufman, *Resolving Ethnic Conflict*

E: **Applied Anthropology**
Lsn 31 (Thurs, Nov 16) **Contemporary Issue: Development and Progress**
Is development necessarily progress?
**Readings:** Anthro:
*Why Can’t People Feed Themselves*
*Arrow of Disease*
*The Price of Progress*

Lsn 32 - (Mon, Nov 20) **Military Anthropology**
What role does anthropology play in the military?
Is it moral for anthropologists to embed with military units in a war zone?

**Readings:** (Blackboard) Lucas, The Morality of Military Anthropology
Blackboard-Beitler Book Review