

BABSON COLLEGE
Division of History and Society

CVA 2008-01: Cultural Anthropology

Fall 2019

INSTRUCTOR: Doug Bafford
EMAIL: dbafford@babson.edu
OFFICE HOURS: Wednesday 12:30-2:30 PM
OFFICE LOCATION: Hollister Hall 317
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CLASS MEETING TIME AND LOCATION: Monday
and Wednesday, 9:45-11:20 AM, Tomasso Hall 103



Course Description:

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology is a four-credit intermediate History and Society course. The central focus of this course is the phenomenon of culture, that remarkable accomplishment that makes humans unique among all other species. We will use the concept of culture to investigate the question of what it means to be human. A major area of focus will be upon the ways cultural meanings are generated, shared, symbolized, ritualized, contested, and altered in the face of different types of challenges. We will also study the relationship of cultural meaning to different economic, kinship, and political systems. Throughout the course, as we study a variety of unfamiliar societies, we will continually refer back to our own societies with the goal of looking at our own ways of doing things with a new frame of mind. This frame of mind, or anthropological perspective, searches for the internal logics and constellations of values and beliefs that underpin all societies and subcultures. Central to this course is a succession of small fieldwork and independent research projects. This course will particularly strengthen your multicultural and rhetorical competencies.

Prerequisites:

As an intermediate-level course, CVA 2008 requires the successful completion of RHT 1000 Foundations of Academic Writing I, RHT 1001 Foundations of Academic Writing II, and AHS 1000 Foundations of Critical Inquiry.

Concentrations:

As you explore different concentrations, note that this course can fulfill the “Identity and Diversity” or the “Social and Cultural Studies” liberal arts concentrations hosted by the Arts and Humanities Division and the History and Society Division.

Required Readings:

The following required books can be purchased through most major online retailers in either physical or electronic format. The Knaft book *must* be the fourth edition, as this has important additional chapters based on the author's more recent visits to the Gebusi that we will study in class. Any edition of the Fadiman text is acceptable. All other required and supplementary readings will be available online via the course Canvas site, which can be accessed at <http://canvas.babson.edu>.

Fadiman, Anne. 1997. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Knaft, Bruce. 2016. *The Gebusi: Lives Transformed in a Rainforest World*. Fourth Edition. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.



Course Objectives:

This course is listed under the “Cultures and Values” (CVA) designation, meaning that it is one of a group of intermediate-level liberal arts courses with common goals and learning objectives. These courses cultivate ethical structures for interrogating the world, deliberating difficult choices, and making sound decisions. Courses in this category focus on frameworks for critically understanding the cultural constructions of meanings and identities and the reciprocal construction of cultural and political context by human beings as ethical agents.

By the end of this course specifically, you should be able to

- Trace in broad strokes the historical development of anthropology as a discipline spanning the social sciences and the humanities
- Understand the influence of cultural logics on behavior, attitudes, and emotions
- Evaluate the prospects and challenges of adopting cultural relativism, as well as differences in moral systems cross-culturally
- Describe the scope of human variability in economic institutions, kinship organization, and political structures
- Consider the cultural dimensions of scientific and religious systems as ways of knowing
- Provide nuanced written analysis of the underlying assumptions behind racial, ethnic, and gendered classification schemes
- Apply anthropological understanding to everyday social life, including medical institutions, higher education, and the world of enterprise

Class Policies:

In order to create the most effective learning environment possible and for the consideration of your fellow students, I ask that we all follow these simple guidelines while in class:

1. Arrive on-time having read the assigned materials and completed any written work due that day. If you come to class after the designated starting time, you will have to produce a convincing excuse, on the spot, related to the day's readings.
2. Turn all cell phones and other electronic communication devices to silent. This simple step is a common courtesy to fellow classmates and mitigates the temptation to check in continuously with electronics. If you must have use of your cell phone (e.g., you are waiting for an important call or otherwise need use of your device), please let me know at the start of class. This course demands your full presence, undistracted by concerns outside the room.
3. Always have a notebook and writing utensil in front of you. We will be writing in every class, and having quick access to something with which to jot down notes will help cultivate a habit of writing, which will serve you well in further liberal arts coursework. **Laptops should only be used when directed for particular class exercises, except in cases of documented disability (see below in "Students with Disabilities").**
4. Allow for an atmosphere of respectful academic discourse. This course covers potentially controversial social topics on which many people (including me) have strong opinions. Try your best to debate respectfully and sympathetically, even when you disagree with your classmates or with me. We want to allow everyone to express his or her perspective in a supportive yet academically critical setting. You may find it helpful to think of our job as to debate *ideas*, not other people.
5. Ask questions about anything (terms, concepts, history, etc.) you do not know or are unsure of. Even if it seems like a silly question, chances are that other people have the same uncertainty, and you will help others by asking it.
6. If you have concerns with anything in the course, please see me as soon as possible. Concerns that build over the course of the semester become more difficult to address; it will be much easier to deal with them as early on as possible. I am always available to find a solution that works best for you, regardless of what issues come up.



Assignments:

You will complete four major kinds of assignments over the course of the semester: an observation exercise, a synthetic essay, an ethnographic case study, and two exams. First, the observation exercise will require you to adopt the techniques of participant observation to construct a miniature project in anthropological fieldwork. The assignment will involve a period of observation and notetaking, after which you will write a short social scientific analysis (no more than three double-spaced pages) of these observations in light of the concepts introduced in course material. For the second major assignment, you will synthesize information found in two of the assigned readings covered during the first part of the course into an original argument. You will need to summarize the core argument and perspective of each author, but more importantly, the goal of this exercise is to consider how each text can shed light on the other and how, together, they constitute a synthetic whole with insights not apparent in each text individually. The essay you submit should be no longer than five double-spaced pages, so conciseness will be key.

The third assignment, the ethnographic case study, requires you to compose an essay of no more than eight double-spaced pages in which you will offer ethnographic data from a culture group of your choice. You will conduct secondary research using library resources (and possibly supplemented with first-hand primary observation) to give a detailed account of one aspect of social life among your chosen group. A critical component of this essay is that you incorporate findings from your own research with the anthropological questions, concepts, and frameworks presented in the course. As your thesis, you will suggest how information about this culture group intervenes into any of the scholarly debates we have explored throughout the course (i.e., how it supports an answer or partial answer to a central anthropological question). More details and submission guidelines for each of these written assignments will be posted to Canvas and discussed in class well in advance of their due dates.

Finally, there will be an in-class midterm exam given approximately halfway through the semester and a final exam given during Babson's designated exam period. For the midterm you will have a full class period to answer a series of short-answer and essay questions based on the readings and class discussions completed thus far. For the final you will have the full allotted period to answer a similarly structured exam; although it draws on core concepts introduced throughout the course, its emphasis will be on the ethnographic cases covered since the midterm. The exam on which you score highest will be weighted at 20% of your final grade, while the other exam will be worth 10%. A study guide for both will be distributed beforehand to help guide your preparation.

All written assignments prepared outside of class should be fully documented with consistent use of a citation style. American anthropologists typically follow the Chicago Manual of Style (author-date version) as a disciplinary convention, and you are welcome to use the same in this course. However, if you are more familiar with another style (e.g., MLA, APA, etc.) and would prefer to use it, you are welcome, as long as you do so consistently. The most important point is that you give clear references to outside texts and ideas you have borrowed, even if the texts have been assigned in class. Resources to help you learn good citation practices are available in Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*, online at the [Horn Library citation guide](#), and in person at Babson's Writing Center (Babson Hall 205). You are also strongly recommended to visit the Writing Center to improve the quality of your academic writing, especially given the writing-intensive nature of this course. You can [visit their website](#) to schedule a thirty-minute appointment, to which you should bring a printed-out copy of the assignment and your current draft.

For each day (or portion thereof) that your paper is late, your grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter (e.g., from B+ to a B). Please remember to read through your entire draft at least once before printing it. Extensions are granted *automatically* for circumstances outside your control equal to the number of study days lost, **provided you let me know ahead of the due date**. Do not hesitate to reach out by email if you are having trouble meeting deadlines or other targets.

Readings:

As in other reading-intensive courses in the humanities and social sciences, you are expected to come to class having carefully read *all* the assigned materials. Due to our relatively small class size, I expect everyone to contribute something (even if it is small) to discussion at each meeting. If you have not closely read the materials for the day, it will be noticeable, and your participation grade will be affected. Since many of our readings will be available electronically on Canvas, some students find it helpful to print them out to annotate while they read and to refer to during class. While you are not *required* to print out all the readings, if you do not have them in front of you during class, I expect you to have taken notes

on some of the important passages, and I may call on you to answer questions about them. Nevertheless, I want you to see the readings for this course not as a burden but as a chance to connect with ideas and ways of knowing that may be unfamiliar to you, even if approaching these themes may be difficult at first.

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance at all classes is expected as a basic requirement of the course. You cannot learn this material if you are not present in class, since much of what we will be covering will be brought out through discussion and many important points are not covered in the readings. Each student will begin with an A in attendance. After the first missed class, each subsequent absence will result in lowering your attendance grade by one-third of a letter (e.g., to an A-, then to a B+, etc.). However, I realize that unexpected things may come up during the semester (e.g., illness, family concerns, etc.) that may prevent you from being in class. Therefore, if you come to see me during office hours (or another time by appointment) to talk about the course content that you missed, this reduction in your grade will be waived.

Furthermore, while attendance will play a crucial part in determining your grade, there is more to being “present” than simply showing up. Your mental presence at and participation in each session is a crucial component of this course and your participation grade, which will be calculated separately from your attendance grade. You cannot earn an A for this component simply by showing up; you must earn it through consistent, careful, thoughtful, and eager engagement in class discussions. This expected level of engagement starts with solid preparation before each meeting. As an incentive to ensure everyone has invested an equal amount of preparation, some meetings will begin with a short quiz based on the assigned readings for the day. These quizzes do not require significant reflection or memorization, nor are you expected to understand everything you have read ahead of time; if you have read and taken notes on the main arguments in each text, you will likely earn 100% on each. They are merely a tool to ensure you are familiar enough with the material to jump into the discussion. Quizzes will be held immediately at the start of class and cannot be made up.

At the same time, careful preparation does not necessarily exclude taking risks; feel free to try new ideas without fear of being wrong. Your participation grade is a function not of correctness but of intellectual boldness and effort exerted, assuming you have put a good faith effort into your preparation and studying. Finally, I understand that outgoing conversation or debate is not a style suited to all learners. Therefore, if you feel you are not able to participate rigorously during class, please let me know so that we can figure out an alternative mode of participation, whether through office hour visits or other activities.



Students with Disabilities:

Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Coordinator of the Learning Center at 781-239-5509 or in Hollister Hall 122 to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Academic Integrity:

The standards and expectation of the Babson Honor Code and its academic honesty and integrity policies apply to this course as well as to any other course you are taking here at Babson. The policy is articulated in your [Undergraduate Handbook](#). Failure of any student to take appropriate steps to fully understand the Code will not be an acceptable nor tolerated excuse for any violations.

Religious Observances:

Any student who faces a conflict between the requirements of a course and the observance of his or her religious faith should contact me as early in the semester as possible. In such event, I will provide reasonable and fair accommodations that do not unduly disadvantage you.

Grading:

You will be evaluated based on the quality of your assignments, the degree of improvement throughout the semester, and the value of your participation in class. Each component of the course will be weighted as follows:

Observation Assignment.....	15%
Part 1: Description	
Part 2: Analysis	
Synthetic Essay	15%
Ethnographic Case Study	20%
Lower Exam Score.....	10%
Higher Exam Score	20%
Attendance and Participation (including quizzes)	20%

Your final grade will be calculated based on the average score of all these categories and will fall on the following scale, as defined by the university:

A.....	High Distinction (for exceptional work)
A-	
B+	
B.....	Distinction (for very good work)
B-	
C+	
C.....	Satisfactory (for acceptable work)
C-	
D+	
D.....	Passing, but Unsatisfactory (for poor work)
D-	
F.....	Failing Grade



Schedule and Important Dates:

<i>Class Unit</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Reading and Assignments Due</i>
Week 1: Prologue – What Is Anthropology All About?	September 4	None
<u>PART I: Principles of Social Organization</u>		
Week 2: Foundations of Anthropological Inquiry	September 9	Syllabus Horace Miner, “Body Ritual among the Nacirema” Bruce Knaft, <i>The Gebusi</i> , Entry and Introduction (pp. 1-9) David Jacobson, <i>Reading Ethnography</i> Robert H. Lavenda and Emily A. Schultz, “Reading Ethnography”
	September 11	Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture” Matthew Engelke, <i>How to Think Like an Anthropologist</i>
Week 3: History of Anthropological Methods and Theory	September 16	Bronislaw Malinowski, <i>Argonauts of the Western Pacific</i> Marshall Sahlins, “Two or Three Things That I Know about Culture” <u>Submit</u> Observation Assignment Part 1: Description
	September 18	Bruce Knaft, <i>The Gebusi</i> , Chapter 3 E.E. Evans-Pritchard, <i>Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande</i>
Week 4: Political and Economic Organization	September 23	E.E. Evans-Pritchard, “The Nuer of the Southern Sudan” Bruce Knaft, <i>The Gebusi</i> , Chapters 1 and 2
	September 25	Richard Lee, “Eating Christmas in the Kalahari” Marshall Sahlins, “Notes on the Original Affluent Society” David Kaplan, “The Darker Side of the ‘Original Affluent Society’”

Week 5: Culture and Enterprise	September 30	Karen Ho, <i>Liquidated</i> Aaron Z. Pitluck, Fabio Mattioli, and Daniel Souleles, “Finance Beyond Function: Three Causal Explanations for Financialization” <u>Submit</u> Observation Assignment Part 2: Analysis
	October 2	Michael M. Prentice, “The Powers in PowerPoint: Embedded Authorities, Documentary Tastes, and Institutional (Second) Orders in Corporate Korea” Michel Anteby, “The ‘Moralities’ of Poaching: Manufacturing Personal Artifacts on the Factory Floor”
PART II: Biology, Culture, and Classification Schemes		
Week 6: Hierarchy and Violence	October 7	Richard Wrangham and Dale Peterson, <i>Demonic Males</i> Robert W. Sussman, “Exploring Our Basic Human Nature: Are Humans Inherently Violent?” Steven Pinker, “The Intellectual War on Science”
	October 9	Sarah Lamb, “The Politics of Dirt and Gender: Body Techniques in Bengali India” Louis Dumont, <i>Homo Hierarchicus</i>
Week 7: Kinship	October 16	Marshall Sahlins, <i>What Kinship Is—And Isn’t</i> Cai Hua, <i>A Society without Fathers or Husbands</i> Bruce Knauft, <i>The Gebusi</i> , Chapters 4 and 9
Week 8: Gender, Sex, and Sexuality	October 21	Margaret Mead, <i>Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies</i> Katrina Karkazis, <i>Fixing Sex</i> Bruce Knauft, <i>The Gebusi</i> , Chapter 5
	October 23	Donald Donham, “Freeing South Africa: The ‘Modernization’ of Male-Male Sexuality in Soweto” David M. Halperin, <i>How to Be Gay</i>
Week 9: Race as a Biological Fiction	October 28	Jared Diamond, “Race without Color” AAA Statement on Race

	October 30	Michael Baran, “‘Girl, You Are Not Morena. We Are Negras!’: Questioning the Concept of ‘Race’ in Southern Bahia, Brazil” Bruce Knauft, <i>The Gebusi</i> , Chapter 10 <u>Submit</u> Synthetic Essay
Week 10: Race and Ethnicity	November 4	Karen Brodtkin Sacks, “How Jews Became White” Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, <i>Ethnicity, Inc.</i>
	November 6	MIDTERM EXAMINATION
<u>PART III: Cultural Meaning and Knowledge Production</u>		
Week 11: Language and Semiotic Systems	November 11	John J. Gumperz and Stephen C. Levinson, <i>Rethinking Linguistic Relativity</i> Franz Boas, “On Alternating Sounds” William O’Grady, “Language: A Preview” (skim for the gist if you’re already familiar with linguistics) Steven Pinker, <i>The Language Instinct</i> (skim) <u>Complete</u> New York Times American Dialect Quiz
	November 13	George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, <i>Metaphors We Live By</i> James Slotta, “The Annotated Donald Trump: Signs of Circulation in a Time of Bubbles”
Week 12: Religious and Scientific Ways of Knowing	November 18	Bruce Knauft, <i>The Gebusi</i> , Chapters 6 and 7 Douglas Bafford, “Religion and Science”
	November 20	Christopher P. Toumey, <i>God’s Own Scientists</i> Byron Good, “Medical Anthropology and the Problem of Belief”
Week 13: Medicine and Culture	December 2	Ilana Löwy, “Historiography of Biomedicine: ‘Bio,’ ‘Medicine,’ and In Between” Anne Fadiman, <i>The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down</i> , Chapters 1-10 Peter Conrad, <i>The Medicalization of Society</i>

	December 4	Anne Fadiman, <i>The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down</i> , Chapters 11-15 Robert J. Thornton, <i>Healing the Exposed Being</i>
Week 14: Applied Anthropology in a Changing World	December 9	Anne Fadiman, <i>The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down</i> , Chapters 17-18 Bruce Knauft, <i>The Gebusi</i> , Chapter 8 Rafael Pérez-Escamilla, Jonathan Garcia, and David Song, "Health Care Access among Hispanic Immigrants: ¿Alguien Está Escuchando?"
	December 11	Christine Miller, <i>Design + Anthropology</i> Bruce Knauft, <i>The Gebusi</i> , Chapters 11 and 12 John Bodley, <i>Victims of Progress</i> <u>Submit</u> Ethnographic Case Study
Exam Week: Epilogue	Friday, December 13, 6:30-8:30 PM <i>or</i> Thursday, December 19, 8:00-10:00 AM	FINAL EXAMINATION

***** NB: This schedule and syllabus are subject to change as we move through the semester. *****

Source for Image on First Page: Bruce Knauft, [online supplement to The Gebusi](#).
(Caption: "Sayu, holding my book, *Exchanging the Past*, open to the photos of he himself as a 5-year old in 1981 (L) and as a young bachelor in 1998 (R).")