



**University of New York, Tirana**

**Introduction to Social-Cultural Anthropology**

Instructor: Dr. Albert Doja, HDR

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Office hours: By appointment. Class Schedule: 9:00 – 12:00 on Wednesday at 4A

**Prerequisites**

English Composition II and Sociology

**Course purpose**

In this course, students will study the basic assumptions, arguments, and concepts that frame contemporary cultural anthropology. The field of anthropology offers perspectives on cultural and social differences in the world. Cultural anthropology brings attention to how we socially construct our worlds, introduces us to new and different ways of living, and helps us to become informed and responsible citizens of an increasingly interconnected world. Students will be asked to think about several related questions: How do we distinguish anthropology from other social sciences like sociology and economics? What is culture, and how does it shape our everyday lives? How do power, inequality, and difference shape social relations? The course will offer an overview of anthropological approaches to selected topics, and will acquaint students with a range of contemporary work in the field. The topics and concepts covered include race and ethnicity, political economy, nationalism, mass media, sports, gender and sexuality, and globalization. Students will read works by anthropologists, and they will also be asked to examine other texts (films, religious holidays, and sporting events) from anthropological perspectives. Readings emphasize case studies in very different settings, drawn from across the globe, including Europe and Albania. Although some of the results and conclusions of anthropology will be discussed, emphasis will be on appreciating cultural difference and its implications, studying cultures and societies through long-term fieldwork, and most of all, learning to think analytically about other people's lives and our own. Throughout the semester, students will be challenged to apply an anthropological perspective to the everyday practices that constitute their own social worlds.

**Course outline**

1. The Anthropological Perspective
2. A brief history of Anthropology
3. Ethnography, fieldwork and its interpretation
4. Applying Anthropology
5. Culture
6. Morality and Cultural Relativism
7. Language and Communication
8. Exchange and Reciprocity
9. Kinship and Descent
10. Marriage and Alliance

## Required readings

### Instructor's readings package, taken from the following:

- Eriksen, Thomas H. 1995. *Small places, large issues: an introduction to social and cultural anthropology*. London: Pluto Press.
- Hendry, Joe. 1999. *An introduction to social anthropology: other people's world*. London: Macmillan.
- Keesing, Rogers M. & Andrew J. Strathern. *Cultural anthropology: a contemporary perspective*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998.
- Kottak, Conrad Phillip. *Cultural Anthropology*, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2008.

## Additional readings

- Doja, Albert. 2000. "The politics of religion in the reconstruction of identities: the Albanian situation", *Critique of Anthropology*, **20** (4), 421–438.
- Backer, Berit. 2003 [1979]. *Behind stone walls: changing household organization among the Albanians of Kosova*, (eds) Antonia Young & Robert Elsie. Peja: Dukagjini Books. [Masters thesis: Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo, Norway, 1979].
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1955. *Tristes Tropiques*. Nouvelle edition. Paris: Plon. [English translation: *Tristes Tropiques*, translated by John and Doreen Weightman. London: Cape, 1973; Albanian translation: *Tropikë të Trishtuar*, Tirana: Botime Cabej].
- Mauss, Marcel. 1924. [1950]. "Essai sur le don: forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques", *Sociologie et anthropologie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, pp. 143–279. [English translation: *The Gift: The Form and Reason for exchange in archaic societies*, translated by W.D. Halls, foreword by Mary Douglas. New York/London: Norton, 1990].
- Ortner, Sherry B. 1984. "Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, **26** (1), 126–166.

## Course requirements

**Participation:** Lecture and active participation attendance is mandatory. In general this class is intensive and interactive. Active participation extends beyond mere attendance. Expect your instructor to keep track of how often you contribute to class discussion (as a whole), particularly during the panel discussion section. Missing class could seriously affect your grade! Each absence will cost you points off of your participation grade. Your absences count whether you have a good excuse or not. University's policy is that if a student is absent for more than 20% of the course (i.e. 9 hours), then 'F' will be the grade awarded for the course.

**Panel Discussion:** Leading a panel discussion will make up 10% of the course grade. Students are expected to present results of their research of issues focused on throughout the course, and actively moderate and propose questions and themes (set the agenda) to advance discussion. Panel members should be solidly informed from their sources, discuss aspects of it with the rest of the class, table and field questions and give educated answers and analysis. The goal of this assignment is to make qualified analyses of mediated issues.

**Exams:** Two examinations will be taken, one during week seven of the course and a final comprehensive exam covering all course content during the final examination period.

**Term examination:** Test format for the first examination is a short essay or research paper, approximately five pages, double-spaced, with standard margins and font size, no extra spaces between paragraphs.

The topic may be about cultural difference and cultural patterning or on non-market exchange. In addition to examples from the class or readings, you may bring in other examples from your reading or experience. You may focus in on one or two main points, or you may cover a few of what seem the most important points to you. Possibilities include:

- An example of cross-cultural difference or mistranslation or misunderstanding
- If you have spent time in another country, differences that struck you or that mattered in your life
- An aspect of life at University or Tirana (or wherever) that seems to be strongly patterned culturally

In any case, it is essential that: 1. You relate your essay to concepts and ideas explored during the course; 2. You avoid taking for granted our culture's assumptions about, e.g., morality and normality; 3. You should present the facts of the case or example (and your personal reaction, if that is relevant), but as much as possible try to make sense of it, to analyze it culturally, making sense out of it and not just repeating facts; 4. you develop an argument. It is probably better to think first of what points you want to make and then decide what material to use. A successful essay paper demonstrates critical thinking by integrating the ideas from the readings and class discussion without simply repeating or restating the information. You need not agree with the lecturer or anyone else, so long as you argue your point of view cogently and do not take our culture's assumptions for granted.

**Final Examination:** Test format for the final examination may combine a mixture of short answer, true/false, matching, sort answer, and one or two essay questions covering *all* readings, lecture, handout, and class discussion content.

For Date and Time consult final exam schedule.

**Assessment:** Evaluation will be based on:

1. **Attendance and active participation (20%)**
2. **Term paper (40%)**
3. **Final Exam (40%)**

The following grading scale will be used as a standard for final evaluation:

Letter Grade	Percent (%)	Generally Accepted Meaning
A	96-100	Outstanding work
A-	90-95	
B+	87-89	Good work, distinctly above average
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Acceptable work
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	

D+	67-69	Work that is significantly below average
D	63-66	
D-	60-62	
F	0-59	Work that does not meet minimum standards for passing the course

### General Requirements

**Deadlines** are *critical*. Therefore, late assignments and absence from tests will *not* be tolerated. *In the event of illness or emergency, contact your instructor IN ADVANCE to determine whether special arrangements are possible. The University's rules on academic dishonesty (e.g. cheating, plagiarism, submitting false information) will be strictly enforced. Please familiarize yourself with the STUDENT HONOUR CODE, or ask your instructor for clarification.*

**Course Policies:** Students are reminded not to approach the instructor for copies of the previous week's materials immediately before, during, or immediately after class. Students are expected to collect materials from their classmates or see the instructor during consultation hours.

The workload assumes that students are spending two hours studying for every one hour in class. For this session that means that you should expect to study for about 6 hours a week outside of the class time, not including the time spent on assignments.

I reserve the right to make changes in the syllabus that do not affect the total amount of work required by students.

Students who are disruptive in class will be asked to leave. Disruption includes anything that negatively interrupts the flow of lecture or discussion. If you need to sleep, please do so outside of class. Cellular phones should be off during class. On no account should students answer their cell phones during class, or leave the room to do so unless you clear it with the instructor before class starts.

I encourage students to work together and help each other out as much as possible in terms of discussing and reviewing the material. However, each student must turn in or complete in class work they have completed originally for this class.

Assignments are to be word-processed. Continuing and regular use of e-mail is expected. Students must keep copies of all assignments and projects sent by e-mail.

**Plagiarism** is a serious offence. Plagiarized work will automatically fail. Plagiarism involves passing of the work of others as your own or any other form of academic dishonesty such as copying from another student in class or submitting the same paper to two different classes. The first incident of plagiarism or cheating will result in an automatic "F" in the course, and appropriate action will be taken with the university authorities. If you have any concerns about what counts as plagiarism, please speak to me or your student advisor. You must also use appropriate referencing in footnotes and attach a bibliography. Again, if you are unsure about referencing, please speak to me.

**Special note:** If you feel that you have special learning difficulties, please, make an appointment with Ms. A. Gramo. She is trained to help students with learning difficulties. She has offered to provide this service to our students.

## Course schedule

<b>Week</b>	<b>Course content</b>
1	<b>The Anthropological Perspective</b>
2	<b>A brief history of Anthropology</b>
3	<b>Ethnography, fieldwork and its interpretation</b>
4	<b>Applying Anthropology</b>
5	<b>Culture</b>
6	
7	<b>Morality and Cultural Relativism</b>
8	<b>Language and Communication</b>
9	
10	<b>Exchange and Reciprocity</b>
11	
12	<b>Kinship and Descent</b>
13	
14	<b>Marriage and Alliance</b>
15	
16	<b>Final Examination</b>