

Syllabus

Anthropological Thought and Praxis 1

ANTH 5010 Online | Dr. Christina Wasson | University of North Texas
Fall 2020

Ambiguity is the warp of life, not something to be eliminated. Learning to savor the vertigo of doing without answers or... making do with fragmentary ones opens up the pleasures of recognizing and playing with pattern, finding coherence within complexity... Improvisation and new learning are not private processes; they are shared with others

— Mary Catherine Bateson, *Peripheral Visions* (1988), 9-10

Course Description

This course is an overview of the intellectual history of cultural and social anthropology. Special emphasis is given to the relationship between theory and application. The course has been revised this year to respond to ongoing protests for racial justice: we will highlight the role of race in the development of anthropological theory and practice. This course is taught as a seminar. Four themes will guide discussions:

1. **The role of race in the development of anthropological theory.** How has the concept of race been theorized in anthropology over the last hundred years? In what ways has anthropological theory been silent on race? How has anthropology been based on racist assumptions and practices? What are contributions of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) scholars that have been underrecognized in our field? In order to examine these issues, we will read publications by BIPOC anthropologists that examine issues of race in the U.S. and worldwide. In addition, I have paired “classic” publications by white anthropologists with readings that either examine the racial assumptions and biases of those anthropologists, or present a different perspective on the same topic by a BIPOC anthropologist.
2. **“Us” versus the “other.”** In what ways have anthropologists implicitly or explicitly defined their “us” and their “other” in their writings? How have these definitions changed over time? BIPOC communities have often been othered by anthropologists, but they are not the only groups that have been othered.
3. **Using theory to address social problems.** How do the theoretical frameworks anthropologists use shape their understandings of particular social problems? How do those frameworks shape the approaches anthropologists develop to address social problems? We will use Black Lives Matter and the historical context that led to this movement for our case study on how theory can be used to address social problems.

4. **The genealogy of ideas.** In what ways did the authors you read in this class build on the ideas of other scholars who came before them? In what ways were their theories a reaction against other scholars? How can we revise traditional genealogies to highlight the contributions of BIPOC authors who may have been underrecognized in their time?

Course Prerequisites

ANTH 5000 or 12 credit hours of prior coursework in anthropology.

Course Objectives

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

- Describe and critically assess the major schools of thought in the history of anthropology
- Describe and critique the role of race in the development of anthropological theory from a number of different vantage points
- Appraise how the anthropologists whose work they read implicitly or explicitly defined their “us” and their “other” in these writings
- Apply theoretical frameworks to an understanding of social problems, and assess the strengths and weaknesses of particular frameworks with regard to particular social problems
- Map the genealogy of ideas in anthropology: in what ways did the anthropologists whose work they read build on the ideas of other scholars who came before them? In what ways were their theories a reaction against other scholars? How can we reconstruct traditional genealogies to make space for the contributions of BIPOC authors who may not have been recognized in their time?

Since this is a graduate seminar, the main learning activities are to read the assigned literature, and to critically analyze the literature in online discussions. Actively participating in these activities is your path to achieving the course objectives.

Instructor Contact Information

Name: Christina Wasson

Office Location: Sycamore 123

Phone Number: +1 940 565 2752

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-5pm or by appointment

Email: christina.wasson@unt.edu

Communication Expectations: You are welcome to communicate with me at any time via phone or email. I will normally respond within 24 hours. I post grades within a week of assignment submission.

Required Texts

In this course, you will be reading 1) an overview book and 2) a set of “classic” articles and book chapters that were written over the last hundred years or so.

1. The book is: Eriksen, Thomas Hylland and Finn Sivert Nielsen. 2013. *A History of Anthropology*, second edition. London: Pluto Press.
2. Links to the articles are in Canvas.

The reading assignments for each week are summarized in the course schedule, below, and they are spelled out in detail at the end of the syllabus. Readings are **not** optional. Students will be thoroughly tested on them.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance and participation in classroom discussions (20% / 200 points). Since this course is a graduate seminar, participation is essential. Class participation makes up twenty percent of your final grade. Your contributions to the online discussions and videoconferences will all be included in your evaluation. You must post at least 5 substantive messages per week in the online discussions; more postings are encouraged. Frankly, I have produced that number due to requests from students; I myself feel that it is somewhat meaningless. You and I will know when you are actively contributing to the weekly discussions.

The goal of our online discussions is to have a good back-and-forth among class participants. This is a seminar-style class, so much of your learning will come from each other. I will be assessing you for the overall quality of the whole conversation, rather than the magnificence of an individual posting.

The following guidelines for online discussions were developed by the first online ANTH 5010 class, as we collaboratively learned how to make best use of the discussion boards. Some of you may not have much experience with asynchronous discussion boards – these simple tips can help the communication process flow smoothly!

- Post your first message(s) by Tuesday of every week.
- Try to check the discussions daily; focus on contributing to just a few threads if your time is limited.
- Only one idea per message!
- Frequent small posts are better than humongous messages at rare intervals. This will enable more back-and-forth between you and your classmates. The goal is an active and engaged conversation, not a monologue.
- If you have a new thought that you want to share, start a new conversational thread by clicking “Create Thread”– this will promote discussion of the topic. If everyone just hits “Reply” to previous messages the overall structure of the conversation will become confusing.
- Change the subject line when you are replying to a message but shifting the focus.

- If other people have already said what you wanted to say about one topic, move on to a different topic.
- Don't put your thoughts in a Word attachment; instead, write them directly in the message field.

2. Midterm (20% / 200 points) and final (30% / 300 points). These exams will test you on your developing understanding of the evolution of anthropological thought. They will cover information contained in the readings and presented in class. Both will be essay exams. Instructions for the midterm will be made available two weeks before the due date. Instructions for the final will be made available three weeks before the due date.

3. Discussion leader (30% / 300 points). Once during the semester, you will prepare a presentation about the week's topic, and lead the class discussion of that topic. Instructions for this assignment are located in the Assignments area of the course, which you can access from the Modules page.

Grading

I am used to grading on an A/B/etc. system, and translating A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, etc. However, the gradebook in Canvas requires me to use a point system. The table below shows how I have translated one system to the other. The number of points depends on whether the assignment is worth 20% of your course grade (200 points) or 30% of your course grade (300 points).

Letter Grade	Out of 4 (Traditional Numerical Scale)	Out of 200 (Traditional x 50)	Out of 300 (Traditional x 75)
A	4	200	300
A-	3.7	185	278
B+	3.3	165	248
B	3	150	225
B-	2.7	135	203
C+	2.3	115	173
C	2	100	150
C-	1.7	85	128
D+	1.3	65	98
D	1	50	75
D-	0.7	35	53
F	0	0	0

An A on all assignments would result in a final score of 1000. A final score above 875 (i.e. 3.5 on a traditional scale) will result in an A in the course. According to UNT policy, final grades do not have plusses or minuses.

UNT Policies

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.

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 \(https://disability.unt.edu/\)](https://disability.unt.edu/).

Emergency Notification & 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.

Weekly Cycle

The course runs on a weekly cycle. There is one lesson for each week. Lessons will always be made available one week in advance, for students who wish to work ahead a bit. The students who are discussion leader for a given week must upload their reports by **Sunday morning at 8 am central time**.

All students must read the lesson, the assigned articles, and the discussion leader's report no later than **Tuesday of each week**. Also, they must start posting to the discussions no later than Tuesday of each week.

Discussions for each lesson will last one week, from Monday morning through Sunday night.

There will be a weekly one-hour videoconference. During the videoconference, the week's discussion leaders will present their topics briefly, and then all students will participate in a discussion. Every call will start with an opportunity to ask the instructor questions.

Schedule for the Semester

The readings linked in Canvas are identified by author's last name and year; for full citations, see the next section of the syllabus.

The course is organized around the following structure:

- Week 1 introduces you to the fundamentals of the course
- Weeks 2-3 provide you with tools to analyze the rest of the readings
- Weeks 4-14 cover the history of ideas in anthropology
- Week 15 is a review

For the history of ideas in anthropology, I have primarily assigned original materials written by famous anthropologists.

In addition, I have assigned chapters from the textbook. The purpose of the textbook is to provide you with a context for the other readings. The textbook describes broader trends in anthropology; it goes over scholars whose work we don't have time to cover in depth; and it gives you the political, economic, and cultural contexts that surrounded the writing of your assigned articles.

Week Start Date	Readings	Lesson
1 Aug 24	N/A	Course Fundamentals
2 Aug 31	Allen and Jobson 2016 Narayan 1993	Race in Anthropology Theory "Us" versus the "Other"
3 Sep 7	Williams 2015 Bonilla and Rosa 2015 Burton 2015	Using Theory to Solve Problems: BLM Case Study
4 Sep 14	<i>History</i> Ch.3:58-61 Boas 1925 Anderson 2019 Deloria 1998 [1944]	American Foundations
5 Sep 21	<i>History</i> Ch.4:68-80, Ch.7:161-165 Mead 1928 Mead and Baldwin 1971 Hurston 2018	The Second Generation

6 Sep 28	<i>History</i> Ch.3:46-58, 61-67, Ch.4:86-92 Malinowski 1922 Radcliffe-Brown 1935 Lewis 1973	Functionalism Midterm Instructions Available on Monday
7 Oct 5	<i>History</i> Ch.6 Turner 1967 Geertz 1973 Fanon 1952	Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology
8 Oct 12	<i>History</i> Ch.7:138-151 Wolf 1982 Taylor 2016	Political Economy Midterm Due on Monday
9 Oct 19	<i>History</i> Ch.7:151-155 Lewin 2006 Ortner 1972 Rodriguez 2015	Feminist Anthropology
10 Oct 26	<i>History</i> Ch.8:176-179 Nader 1972 Said 1978 Harrison 1991	Studying Up, Postcolonial Studies, Decolonizing Anthropology
11 Nov 2	<i>History</i> Ch.8:166-175, 179-191 Foucault 1977 Rabinow 1977	Postmodernism and Poststructural Approaches 1
12 Nov 9	<i>History</i> Ch.7:158-161 Bourdieu 1998a Bourdieu 1998b	Poststructural Approaches 2
13 Nov 16	<i>History</i> Ch.9 Appadurai 1996 Marcus 1995 Thomas and Clarke 2006	Anthropology of Globalization Final Exam Instructions Available on Monday
14 Nov 23	Harrison 2016	Recognizing More Diverse Forms of Theory in Anthropology
15 Nov 30	N/A	Review
Finals Dec 7		Final Exam Due on Monday

Readings Available via Canvas

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- Week 2** Allen, Jafari Sinclair and Ryan Cecil Jobson. 2016. The decolonizing generation: (Race and) theory in anthropology since the eighties. *Current Anthropology* 57(2):129-140.
- Narayan, Kirin. 1993. How native is a "native" anthropologist? *American Anthropologist* 95(3):671-686.
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- Week 3** Williams, Bianca C., ed. 2015. Hot spots: #BlackLivesMatter: Anti-black racism, police violence, and resistance. *Society for Cultural Anthropology Fieldsights Blog Series*. June 29. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/series/blacklivesmatter-anti-black-racism-police-violence-and-resistance>.
- Bonilla, Yarimar and Jonathan Rosa. 2015. #Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States. *American Ethnologist* 42(1): 4-17.
- Burton, Orisanmi. 2015. To protect and serve whiteness. *North American Dialogue* 18(2): 38-50.
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- Week 4** Boas, Franz. 1925. What is a race? *The Nation* 120 (3108):89-91.
- Anderson, Mark. 2019. Franz Boas, miscegenation, and the White problem. In *From Boas to black power: Racism, liberalism, and American anthropology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 60-89.
- Deloria, Ella. 1998 [1944]. Introduction and Chapter 4: Kinship's role in Dakota life. In *Speaking of Indians*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, ix-xix and 24-38.
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- Week 5** Mead, Margaret. 1973 [1928]. Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 10. In *Coming of age in Samoa: A psychological study of primitive youth for western civilization*. Washington, DC: American Museum of Natural History, 1-21 and 73-87.
- Mead, Margaret and James Baldwin. 1971. *A rap on race*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3WNO6f7rjE0>.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. 2018. Introduction, I, II, III, IV, V. In *Barracoon: The story of the last "black cargo"*. New York: Amistad Press, 5-49.
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- Week 6** Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1950 [1922]. Introduction: The subject, methods and scope of this inquiry. In *Argonauts of the western Pacific: An account of native enterprise and adventure in the archipelagos of Melanesian New Guinea*. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co, 1-25.
- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. 1935. On the concept of function in social science. *American Anthropologist* 37(3):394-402.
- Lewis, Diane. 1973. Anthropology and colonialism. *Current Anthropology* 14(5):581-602.
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- Week 7** Turner, Victor. 1967. Symbols in Ndembu ritual. In *The forest of symbols: Aspects of Ndembu ritual*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 19-47.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 3-30.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1952. The lived experience of the black man. In *Black skin, white masks*, translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 89-119.
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- Week 8** Wolf, Eric R. 1982. Introduction. *Europe and the people without history*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 3-23.
- Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. 2016. Chapter 7: From #BlackLivesMatter to Black liberation. In *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black liberation*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 191-219.
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- Week 9** Lewin, Ellen. 2006. Introduction. In *Feminist anthropology: A reader*, ed. Ellen Lewin. Malden: Blackwell, 1-38.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 1972. Is female to male as nature is to culture? *Feminist Studies* 1(2):5-31.
- Rodriguez, Cheryl. 2015. Mothering while Black: Feminist thought on maternal loss, mourning and agency in the African diaspora. *Transforming Anthropology* 24(1):61-69.
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- Week 10** Nader, Laura. 1972. Up the anthropologist – perspectives gained from studying up. In *Reinventing anthropology*, ed. Dell Hymes. New York: Random House/Vintage, 284-311.
- Said, Edward. 1978. Chapter 1: The scope of orientalism (section I). In *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 31-49.
- Harrison, Faye V. 1991. Anthropology as an agent of transformation: Introductory comments and queries. In *Decolonizing anthropology: Moving further toward an anthropology for liberation*, ed. Faye V. Harrison. Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association, 1-15.
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- Week 11** Foucault, Michel. 1977. The means of correct training. In *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 135-169.
- Rabinow, Paul. 1977. Ali: An insider's outsider. In *Reflections on fieldwork in Morocco*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 31-69.
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- Week 12** Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998a. The economy of symbolic goods. In *Practical reason: On the theory of action*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 92-123.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1998b. The essence of neoliberalism. *Le Monde diplomatique* December. Translated by Jeremy J. Shapiro.
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- Week 13** Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. In *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 27-47.
- Marcus, George. 1995. Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24:95-117.
- Thomas, Deborah A. and Kamari Maxine Clarke. 2006. "Introduction: Globalization and the transformations of race." In *Globalization and race: Transformations in the cultural productions of Blackness*, ed. Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah A. Thomas. Durham: Duke University Press, 1-36.

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- Week 14** Harrison, Faye V. 2016. Theorizing in ex-centric sites. *Anthropological Theory* 16(2-3): 160-176.
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