

ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CULTURE AND SOCIETY

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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. Become conversant using introductory and intermediate anthropological terms and concepts as they apply to culture and society in the United States and elsewhere.
2. Evaluate social tropes or “stereotypes”, normative assumptions, and multiple perspectives of culture and society in the U.S. utilizing anthropological terms and concepts.
3. Increase sensitivity to socio-economic concerns in the U.S., build awareness of causal and correlative factors, and understand public-private partnerships and tensions surrounding these issues.
4. Reflect on relationships between local, state, national institutions, organizations and corporations in the U.S. and their impacts on disadvantaged groups.
5. Establish and refine skills for discussing contemporary, sometimes contentious, sometimes innocuous, events in U.S. culture utilizing an anthropological perspective.
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](#) (Links to an external site.)

It is the student’s responsibility to ensure they familiarize themselves with the Hardware and Software Requirements for CANVAS as stipulated in the module: “[Online Course Technology Requirements & Skills](#)” as well as conduct a [CANVAS browser check](#).

Course Structure

This course takes place 100% online. During the Fall, we will spend roughly one week on each module. When this course is offered in Summer, we will cover roughly two modules per week.

The 14 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** - These discussions will cover salient themes and materials and will consist of **one original post** (150-200 word post/or other required material) and **two peer responses** (100-150 word response x2).
- **Critical Reflection/Responses** - Every other Module, you will be asked to submit a short (250 word or other required material) entry over a specific topic **relating to one of the three major course themes**.
- **Engaged Anthropology Assignment** - At the end of the semester, you will submit a video presentation to satisfy the civic engagement component of American Culture and Society. These assignments require you to present your work in a 2-minute FlipGrid or other recorded presentation. If you are unwilling/unable to record your presentation, you may submit a 2-minute podcast instead.

Prerequisites

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

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 Dr. Squires or your IAs!

Assessments and Scoring

Discussion Forums (13 @ 20points each) 260 points

Due: Sundays for fall; Thursdays and Sundays for Summer (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.

Critical Reflection and Response (6 @ 50 points each) 350 points

Due: Sundays (check schedule for dates)

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 Presentations - (1 @ 200 points) 200 points

Due: (check schedule for dates)

This benchmark presentation will be a personalized and creative application of the course learning objectives. At the end-of-semester, video presentations will be submitted either in a Flipgrid or another permitted, accessible presentation format. The presentation considers all three major course themes and situates them within a greater context of anthropological thought. Podcasts are a suitable alternative to Flipgrid presentations, provided all req's are met.

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.

Grading

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

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

Grade-related Policies

Late Work

Discussion Forums: 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.

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

Critical Reflection/Response entries and Engaged Anthropology Presentation: 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 for any reason other than a University-approved activity (work, vacation, etc.) will **not** be considered excused absence.

This is an online class; hence, illness must be accompanied by documentation.

Extensions

Extension requests for assignments *without documentation* will be considered if requested in writing (via email) to Dr. Squires *at least* 24 hours PRIOR to the due date of the assessment. **Late penalty for any unexcused late work will amount to ½ letter grade per day.** Late work must be completed within one week/module 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. Because the Instructional Assistants are also students, there may be times when work is graded within 2 weeks. If you have not received a grade for an assignment within two weeks of the submission date, contact Dr. Squires or the course Instructor immediately.

Grade Disputes

Grading of written assignments are completed by Instructional Assistants, who are Master's Candidates in Applied Anthropology. Dr. 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 Dr. Squires is final.

Extra Credit (CHECK THIS OUT!)

There will be at least one opportunity for extra credit: if 75% of the class submits a SPOT Evaluation then everyone in the class will receive an additional +1% to be added to their final grade.

Course Policies

Assignment Policy

Assignments will be due ON THE DATE ASSIGNED by 11:59pm. All work submitted for credit must be ORIGINAL works created by the student uniquely for this class, for the current session. **If a student is re-taking ANTH 3101 then they must seek the approval of Dr. Squires prior to re-submitting work otherwise it will be considered plagiarism.**

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. If you are having trouble understanding a module's content or an assignment feel free to set up a ZOOM appointment with your IA or with Dr. S. If your concern is of a sensitive nature, reach out to Dr. Squires via email in order to schedule a ZOOM appointment. **Please practice Netiquette in all communications and interactions. This means constructing formal emails with a subject heading, an introduction, an explanation, and a signature.** Emails are not texts. We expect professional interactions from you, and you can expect them in return from us.

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

- a. Concerns about the nature of the course material (bias, sensitivity, equity)
- b. Extension requests
- c. Re-Grade requests
- d. Extenuating circumstances/concerns (cheating, harassment, health, etc.)
- e. ODA Requests (please see ODA policy, below)
- f. Requests for Incomplete (INC)

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

Current list of [Student Help Desk hours](#)

For additional support, visit this [Canvas Technical Help](#) 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, collusion, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, reproduction, 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 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.

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.

University of North Texas F-1 Visa Compliance

To comply with immigration regulations, an F-1 visa holder within the United States may need to engage in an on-campus experiential component for this course. This component (which must be approved in advance by the instructor) can include activities such as taking an on-campus exam, participating in an on-campus lecture or lab activity, or other on-campus experience integral to the completion of this course. If such an on-campus activity is required, it is the student's responsibility to do the following: 1) Submit a written request to the instructor for an on-campus experiential component within one week of the start of the course. 2) Ensure that the activity on campus takes place and the instructor documents it in writing with a notice sent to the International Student and Scholar Services Office. ISSS has a form available that you may use for this purpose. Because the decision may have serious immigration consequences, if an F-1 student is unsure about their need to participate in an on-campus experiential component for this course, they should contact the UNT International Student and Scholar Services Office by telephone 940-565-2195 or email internationaladvising@unt.edu for clarification.

Undocumented Students

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

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 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.

Academic Support Services

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

Student Services

- [Multicultural Center](#)
- [Counseling and Testing Services](#)
- [Student Affairs Care Team](#)
- [Student Health and Wellness Center](#)
- [UNT Pride Alliance](#)
- [UNT Food Pantry \(YES - THEY ARE OPEN DURING THE SUMMER\)](#)

Looking forward to a great fall – Dr. S