

ANTH 101: Cultural Anthropology

Spring 2021

Instructor: Leigh Bloch

Class time: Tues/Thurs 3:40-4:55pm

Zoom Classroom Link: [Here](#)

Zoom Classroom Password: 2021ANT101

Email: lbloch@agnesscott.edu

Office Hours: Wed 1:00-3:00 or by appt.

Office Hours Zoom Link: [Here](#)

Course Description

This course introduces students to the field of cultural anthropology: The study of human cultural diversity or how people make meaning in the world. We will study key topics in the field, including anthropological approaches to the concept of culture, globalization, and power and inequality. Students will learn to see with an “anthropological eye” by investigating cultural worlds and global interconnections “from the ground up” that privileges the perspectives of marginalized peoples. Students will also be introduced to the practical, ethical, and intellectual challenges associated with anthropological research. By the end of the course, students will have an understanding of what anthropology is and how it has and can be used to understand, create, perpetuate, and challenge social relations.

Course goals

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Investigate how people make meaning and construct cultural worlds;
- Analyze ideologies, power relations, and violence underlying different cultural systems and contexts;
- Explain key anthropological concepts such as culture, ethnography, ethnocentrism, and cultural relativism;
- Articulate how anthropological perspectives can help illuminate social problems and apply this approach in other academic disciplines;
- Articulate an expanded sense of social possibility that attends to the reality of human diversity.

Prerequisites

None. This is an introductory-level course that can be used to meet General Education global learning requirements. It is a requirement for the major and minor in Sociology and Anthropology.

Workload

This is a 4-credit course. Students should expect to complete an additional nine hours of work each week in addition to class meeting times (class meeting time includes participation in asynchronistic activities as detailed below).

Grading

Your grade will consist of the following elements:

Participation

30 points

Weekly Journal	10 points
Paper 1	20 points
Paper 2	20 points
Final Portfolio Assignment	20 points

A: The student consistently makes creative contributions to discussion and moves the conversation forward in significant ways. The student draws connections between course materials and extends key concepts by applying them to new situations. Engages with both the instructor *and* with fellow students.

B: The student consistently contributes to class discussion and demonstrates a solid understanding of course materials. The student thinks through the readings, other students' comments, and one's own points well. Engages with both the instructor *and* with fellow students.

C: The student sometimes participates in class discussion and understands most of the facts of the readings, but perhaps not the big picture.

D: The student only infrequently participates in class discussion or makes statements that are unrelated or do not advance the project of the course. Only has a partial understanding of the materials. Spotty attendance.

F: The student does not consistently come to class, does not participate in or disrupts class discussion, or misses the point of course materials. This is a failing grade.

Participation

The class will be divided into synchronistic (we all attend class at the same time) and asynchronistic (we complete work at our own pacing) days. Unless otherwise noted, Tuesdays are asynchronous and Thursdays are synchronous. *Participation in both synchronous and asynchronous sessions is a requirement for passing this course.*

Synchronistic class sessions will be held over zoom. We will work through course materials through lecture and class discussion, during which we will review, interpret, extend, draw connections between, and critique the readings. As such, students must come to class having completed the readings and prepared to discuss them. Discussions will be focused less on discovering a singular "right answer" than deepening our inquiry into social and cultural processes. Departing from a "banking" model of education in which knowledge is "deposited" in students' brains and "withdrawn" in tests—primary teaching students to regurgitate information—the goal of these discussions will be to practice the tools of critical thinking and analysis.

You are not required to have your camera on during synchronistic class meetings. It is a good practice to mute your audio unless you are speaking (except for in small group breakout rooms) but be mindful of remembering to un-mute your audio when you wish to speak. If you say something and don't receive a response, check to see if you are muted.

For asynchronistic classes, you will be required to watch a recorded lecture and participate in a text-based online forum discussing the readings/lecture. While watching the lectures, write down any questions that come up in your notes. You can either ask these questions to your peers via the forum or save them for the next synchronistic class and ask me. For the forum component of these classes, you are required to write at minimum one post and comment on two of your peers' posts (for a total of three posts/comments). Please note that I may provide specific prompts for forum posts in my recorded lectures.

Tips for good forum posts:

- Open-ended questions about the lecture/readings (as opposed to a yes/no question or a request for factual information) can spawn a discussion;
- Anything you found surprising in the lecture/readings is excellent to write about. Feeling surprise means that something from the course went against your prior preconceived assumptions about the world or human nature. That's interesting! Unpack your assumptions and the implications of the course materials. How did they contradict or complicate your assumptions? How else might we understand human society – and social possibility – in way that accounts for this new information?

Agnes Scott Zoom Policy

To preserve the integrity of the classroom experience and to protect students' privacy, which we are legally required to do, only students registered in the course may attend a Zoom class meeting.

Synchronous classes will be recorded and posted on Canvas.

Written Assignments

For this course, you will complete weekly journaling assignments and three papers. With the exception of fieldnotes and journal entries, written work must be proofread, double-spaced, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins and numerated pages. I will hand out prompts for essay assignments at least two weeks before the deadline so that you can manage your time appropriately. Written work will be submitted via Canvas.

These assignments are designed to respond to long-term trauma. They use insights from mindfulness and somatic therapy techniques in order to help activate different parts of your brain/body as you apply course themes and frameworks to local places and experiences. However, if any of these assignments actually exacerbate trauma (avoiding being present in our body is a legitimate coping skill), you may opt to complete a more traditional analytical essay instead (details below).

Paper 1: Making Social Observations

For this paper, you will pick a "site" to visit and analyze. This could be a city park, a part of campus, or a nature trail (it should, however, be a place where you can socially distance). Find a place to sit and watch the space and the people in it for 1-2 hours. Take notes on your observations about the place and the people in it. What did you observe? How do people interact in this place, and what are the cultural protocols? 3-5 pages; cite a minimum of 2 sources from the class.

Paper 2: Household Museum/Family Histories

For this paper, you will choose one of two options.

Option 1: Critical Family Histories

Interview a family member (chosen family are 100% acceptable subjects) or friend. Record your conversation and take notes (make sure the interviewee knows they are being recorded and consents). Ask them about their family stories. Analyze their account, drawing connections to materials and themes from the course. Drawing on the concept of critical place-based family histories from the course, how do systematic social inequalities and structural violence (e.g., race, class, gender, colonialism) manifest in these family histories? Are these dimensions explicit or silenced in their account? 3-5 pages; cite a minimum of 2 sources from the class.

Option 2: Household Museum

Curate an “exhibit” of material culture from your home. These should be organized according to coherent themes in order to tell a story about your household through material culture. Who lives in this place and how does their material culture reflect, illustrate, or tell their identities and stories? Where do these things come from and how do these objects connect your house to larger social or economic processes? How does this material culture (or even the physical space of the house) shape and get shaped by your housemates social and cultural practices? How are cultural practices and global connections “felt” on a bodily and sensory level? Photograph your “exhibit” and write a paper discussing what you are trying to communicate through it, connecting that material to course readings and themes. 3-5 pages; cite a minimum of 2 sources from the class.

Journal and Final Portfolio Assignments

Each week you should write a journal entry reflecting on the course materials. Examples of journal entries could include:

- How do course materials relate to events in your own experience (or a family member or friend’s experience)?
- Visit a place, such as a park, a neighborhood, or a place of worship (digital “places” are fine for this exercise). What is it like to physically be in these places, and what are the sights, the sounds, the smells? How might these places tell a story about the social and cultural webs of your homeplace or city?
- Visit a historical site, such as MLK’s birth home or Etowah Mounds (it is OK if you cannot go in the museum due to social distancing procedures). As for the above prompt, what is it like to be in that place? How is history represented to the public in these places, i.e., what kind of narrative does the place aim to tell? How does that history relate to broader trends of whose stories and perspectives are centered and marginalized in mainstream histories?

I recommend completing each of these prompts in different weeks over the course of the semester.

If you miss a week here and there, don’t stress about it. However, there will be periodic journal checks throughout the semester. The aim of the checks is to provide a level of structure and accountability for completing this assignment. These will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Additionally, due to the difficulties of sharing notes that may be handwritten in the campus shut

down, these checks will consist of a simple yes/no survey asking if you have completed the journal entries and a short description of the general topics you've journaled about.

For Paper 3, you will submit a portfolio of your three best journal entries. You may revise or expand on these for your submission. 6-9 pages, double spaced; must cite a minimum of 4 course materials.

Alternative Creative Option

In lieu of a written paper, students may opt to undertake a creative project that addresses the core concerns of the final. For example, such a project could consist of a comic, zine, or painting. Students must first obtain permission from the professor before opting for the creative option.

You may also opt to complete creative works in lieu of traditional journal entries for any week you like without review by the professor, as long as that work helps you process course materials, questions, and themes. However, any creative entries submitted for the final project will likely need to be accompanied by an artist's statement (I will give you instructions when we talk)

Late Assignments

In order to maximize your autonomy to prioritize your own physical and emotional health during a pandemic, there will be no penalties for late work.

That said, being able to manage workloads to accomplish assignments on time is an important life skill. Just as I am trying to be respectful of your time, I ask that you return the favor by respecting mine. Late work creates a workload burden for me, because it keeps me from being able to sit down and grade assignments from the whole class in a timely fashion. For this reason, I always provide a prompt for assignments at least two weeks prior to the deadline so that you can manage your time appropriately

Additionally, in order to avoid receiving an F for missing assignments, you must communicate with me to set an appropriate extension deadline. College policy dictates all "work of the semester" (minus final projects and exams) must be turned in no later than 9 AM on 12/1, and no work can be accepted after 5 PM on 12/7. If you wish to take an "incomplete" for the course, you must communicate this with me in advance.

Absences

In order to maximize your autonomy to prioritize your own physical and emotional health during a pandemic, attendance will be run on an honor system. There will be no penalties for missing class, but students will get more out of the class by participating in in-class discussions and other activities.

I will take attendance each class meeting for my own personal use. If I do not see you in class a for several sessions and have not heard from you as to why, I may follow up with you directly to make sure you are doing OK.

Honor System and Plagiarism

Students are expected to adhere to the principles of the Honor Pledge in all aspects of this class. One of the most important things you will learn as an Agnes Scott student is how to use the writings of others in combination with your own ideas and research to create thoughtful papers that make contributions to the world of knowledge with full credit to all the minds that have participated. If you directly (direct quotations) or indirectly (paraphrases, other borrowings) borrow ideas from others—whether those ideas appear in books, articles, or online, or develop during conversations—you must give proper and full credit to the original sources.

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's ideas or words without giving them credit. This can mean using someone's ideas without proper acknowledgement in papers you are writing for class, copying a sentence directly from a book or journal without citing the source, or turning in the same paper or assignment for different classes without the professors' knowledge. In the United States, there are specific requirements for documenting sources and ideas. You can learn about these standards by consulting your professors or by visiting the Writing Center. Plagiarism is a serious offense and the penalty ranges from warnings to probation or 5 suspension. I do not mind if students work together and discuss their ideas, but students are expected to prepare assignments and write papers independently unless otherwise instructed.

Academic Honesty Statement from the Committee on Academic Standards and Admission

"The Agnes Scott College honor code embodies an ideal of character, conduct, and citizenship, and is an important part of the College's mission and core identity. This applies especially to academic honesty and integrity. Passing off someone else's work as your own represents intellectual fraud and theft, and violates the core values of our academic community. To be honorable, you should understand not only what counts as academic dishonesty, but also how to avoid engaging in these practices. You should:

- review each course syllabus for the professor's expectations regarding course work and class attendance.
- attribute all ideas taken from other sources; this shows respect for other scholars. Plagiarism can include portraying another's work or ideas as your own, buying a paper online and turning it in as if it were your own work, or not citing or improperly citing references on a reference page or within the text of a paper.
- not falsify or create data and resources or alter a graded work without the prior consent of your professor. This includes making up a reference for a works cited page or making up statistics or facts for academic work.
- not allow another party to do your work/exam, or submit the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from the course instructors. Cheating also includes taking an exam for another person, looking on another person's exam for answers, using exams from previous classes without permission, or bringing and using unauthorized notes or resources (i.e., electronic, written, or otherwise) during an exam.
- not facilitate cheating, which can happen when you help another student complete a take home exam, give answers to an exam, talk about an exam with a student who has not taken it, or collaborate with others on work that is supposed to be completed independently.
- be truthful about the submission of work, which includes the time of submission and the place of submission (e.g., email, online, in a mailbox, to an office, etc.)

“You should understand that penalties resulting from dishonest conduct range from failure of the assignment to expulsion from the college. You should speak with your professors if you need clarification about any of these policies.”

Modified Pledge

Students pledge that they have completed assignments honestly by attaching the following statement to each test, quiz, paper, overnight assignment, in-class essay, or other work:

I pledge that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized aid on this assignment.
(Signed) _____

Communications

To attend office hours, please schedule an appointment on COMPASS.

I will respond to reasonable email inquiries within a reasonable timeframe: Usually within 24 hours. If you don't hear back from me after that time, feel free to follow up. I expect your emails to be courteous and professional: It is good etiquette to include a salutation and signature and to make the subject line relevant to the content. Proofread all emails before sending. Although grammar and email etiquette standards are ultimately a means of reproducing social hierarchies, these skills will make your life easier.

Changes to the syllabus, accommodations for snow days, and other logistical issues for the course will be communicated via email.

Title IX

Agnes Scott is here to help if you have experienced any form of sexual harassment or violence, dating or domestic violence, or stalking. Please talk to any faculty or staff member with whom you feel comfortable. Faculty and staff members want to support you and have been trained to help. They also will inform the Title IX office so that you can learn about the options available to you. If you do not want college administrators to know what you have experienced, you may talk to the chaplain, as well as nurses or counselors in the Wellness Center in complete confidentiality. They will not tell anyone what you share with them unless you give your express permission.

Please note that I am a Required Reporter. This means that if you discuss a Title IX violation with me, I am required to report this information to the Title IX Coordinator. That person will reach out to you to offer resources and explain your options, but you are not required to accept their offer to talk.

Inclusion

This course adheres to the principles of diversity and inclusion integral to the Agnes Scott community. We respect people from all backgrounds and affirm people's decisions about gender expression and identity. Please inform me if your name is different from the one listed on the class roster and feel free to correct me if I ever use the wrong name or pronoun.

Over the course of the semester, we will talk about multiple forms of oppression and structural violence, including colonialism, race, class, gender, and sexuality. If you experience discomfort discussing these topics, I encourage you to “lean in” to that discomfort as part of the learning process. These conversations are not about whether you as an individual are a good or bad person, but about understanding broader social structures and processes that shape the world we live in. At minimum, I expect all students to work to understand the arguments of the readings and the course – even if they disagree with them.

Content Warnings

I will do my best to provide content warnings when reading about or discussing things that may trigger past traumas. I encourage you to do the same if you raise such an issue in discussion. If a discussion triggers a past trauma for you, you are welcome to leave the class until you feel ready to return without penalty. If you wish to discuss why you left after class, I accept those conversations as an important engagement with course materials and learning objectives. However, you are not required to do so.

Accessibility

I strive to make my classes accessible to all students. Please communicate with me early in the semester to let me know what your needs are and what kinds of accommodations I can provide. These conversations are confidential. If you have not already done so, contact Rashad Morgan in the Office of Academic Advising (X6174) to complete the registration process. If you have an accommodations letter, please provide me with a copy.

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations will be completed online. Near the end of the semester, you will receive an email message that will provide a link to complete the evaluation. These are very important to me because they provide critical feedback that I use for improving the course and my teaching.

I also ask that students complete a mid-semester feedback form. Information from your responses are exclusively for my own use (the end-of-semester evaluations are also used by the administration). The mid-semester feedback form is important because it lets me adapt and tailor my courses to your needs during the semester.

Required Texts

- Jason de León. 2015. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Ebook](#) available through the library.
- James Spradley and David W. McCurdy. 2015. *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Page West. 2016. *Dispossession and the Environment: Rhetoric and Inequality in Papua New Guinea*. New York: Columbia University Press. [Ebook](#) available through the library.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1

Tuesday, January 19

Introduction to the Class

- Read the syllabus!

Thursday, January 21

What is Anthropology? An Introduction to Four Fields

- In C&C: Horace Miner, "Body Ritual Among the Narcerima." External text [here](#).
- "Revolutionary Hope: A Conversation Between James Baldwin and Audre Lorde." [Link](#).
- Find out whose land you live on now and whose land you were born/raised on. [Link](#).

Week 2

Tuesday, January 26

Core Concepts: Culture, Ethnocentrism, Cultural Relativism

- In C&C: Laura Bohannan, "Shakespeare in the Bush." External text [here](#).
- In C&C: Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Mother's Love: Death Without Weeping." External text [here](#).

Thursday, January 28

Core Concepts: Culture and Ethnography

- Norma Mendoza-Denton, "Beginning Fieldwork." In *Homegirls: Language and Cultural Practice Among Latina Youth Gangs*.

Week 3

Tuesday, February 2

Humans and the Environment

- In C&C: Lee, "The Hunters." External link [here](#).
- Film: The Goddess and the Computer. [Link](#)

Thursday, February 4

Core Concepts: Whose Knowledge?

- bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness."
- Emily Martin, "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles." [Link](#).

Week 4

Tuesday, February 9

Evolution is Good Scholarship but Social Evolutionism is Not

- Paige West, *Dispossession and the Environment*, 1-36

Thursday, February 11

Problematising "the Primitive"

- Paige West, *Dispossession and the Environment*, 37-86

Journal Check February 11

Week 5

Tuesday, February 16

Problematizing “the Primitive”

- Paige West, *Dispossession and the Environment*, 87-140

Thursday, February 18

Culture is Not Like Billiards: Global Interconnection

- Paige West, *Dispossession and the Environment*, 141-152
- Film: The Japanese Version. [Link](#)

Week 6

Tuesday, February 23

Culture is Not Like Billiards: Global Interconnection

- In C&C: Philippe Bourgois, “Poverty at Work.” External link [here](#).
- In C&C: Sonia Patten, “Malawi versus the World Bank”

Thursday, February 25

Anthropological Ethics

- AAA Code of Ethics. [Link](#).
- “The Tuskegee Study,” “Timeline,” and “Implications for Research.” CDC. [Link](#).

Paper 1 due February 25

Week 7

Tuesday, March 2

Core Concept: Power, Hegemony, and Structural Violence

- Film: The Matrix. [Link](#).
- Ursula Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas.” [Audiobook](#).
- N.K. Jemisin, “The Ones Who Stay and Fight.” [Link](#).

Thursday, March 4

Race and Ethnicity

- AAA Statement on Race. [Link](#).
- In C&C: Jefferson M. Fish, “Mixed Blood.” External link [here](#).
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 5-16.

Week 8

Tuesday, March 9

Race and Ethnicity

- Eve Tuck and Kim Tallbear, “Red and Black DNA, Blood, Kinship and Organizing with Kim Tallbear.” *The Henceforward* (Podcast). [Link](#).
- Caroline Randall Williams, “You Want a Confederate Monument? My Body is a Confederate Monument.” *New York Times*. [Link](#).

- Optional: Lee Baker, “The History and Theory of a Racialized Worldview.” In *From Savage to Negro*.

Thursday, March 11

Gender and Sexuality

- Don Kulick, “The Gender of Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes” *American Anthropologist*. [Link](#).
- In C&C: Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” Original article [here](#).
- Rhon Manigault-Bryant, “An Open Letter to White Liberal Feminists.” *African American Intellectual History Society*. [Link](#).
- Optional: Jackie Wang, “Against Innocence: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Safety.” *LIES: A Journal of Materialist Feminism*. [Link](#).

Journal Check March 11

Week 9

Tuesday, March 16

- **NO CLASS – Spring Break**

Thursday, March 18

Kinship

- Selection from Kath Weston, *Families We Choose*.
- Kim TallBear on *All My Relations* (podcast), “Decolonizing Sex.”

Week 10

Tuesday, March 23

Settler Colonialism

- Patrick Wolfe and J. Kēhaulani Kauanui. 2017. “On Settler Colonialism.” In *Speaking of Indigenous Politics*.
- Mikdashi, Maya (Ojibwe). 2013. “What Is Settler Colonialism? (for Leo Delano Ames Jr.)” (PDF on Canvas).

Thursday, March 25

Oral and Family Histories

- Kristen French, Amy Sanchez, and Eddy Ullom. 2020. “Composting Settler Colonial Distortions: Cultivating Critical Land-Based Family History.” *Genealogy*. [Link](#).

Week 11

Tuesday, March 30

Beyond the Human

- Vanessa Watts, “Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European World Tour.” [Link](#).
- Don Kulick. “Fat Pets.” [Link](#).

Thursday, April 1

Religion and the Sacred

- Matt Wray, “White Trash Religion.” In *White Trash: Race and Class in America*. PDF on Canvas.
- Optional: In C&C: George Gmelch, “Baseball Magic.” External link [here](#).

Journal Check April 1

Week 12

Tuesday, April 6

A Problem-Oriented Approach to Four Field Anthropology

- Jason de León, *The Land of Open Graves*, 1-38

Thursday, April 8

A Problem-Oriented Approach to Four Field Anthropology

- Jason de León, *The Land of Open Graves*, 38-86

Paper 2 due April 8

Week 13

Tuesday, April 13

A Problem-Oriented Approach to Four Field Anthropology

- Jason de León, *The Land of Open Graves*, 87-144

Thursday, April 15

Environment and Structural Violence

- Jason de León, *The Land of Open Graves*, 145-166

Week 14

Tuesday, April 20

Environment and Structural Violence

- Jason de León, *The Land of Open Graves*, 167-202

Thursday, April 22

The Politics of Letting Die

- Jason de León, *The Land of Open Graves*, 203-238

Week 15

Tuesday, April 27

The Politics of Letting Die

- Jason de León, *The Land of Open Graves*, 238-289

Thursday, April 29

The Politics of Making Live

- Lisa Stevenson, “The Suicidal Wound and Fieldwork among Canadian Inuit.” In *Being There: The Fieldwork Encounter and the Making of Truth*. [Link](#).

- Macario Garcia. 2017. "The Echo."

Journal Check April 29

Week 16

Tuesday, May 4

Using Anthropology

- Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology." *Current Anthropology*. [Link](#).
- Kim TallBear, "Caretaking Relations, Not American Dreaming." *Kalfou*. [Link](#).

Paper 3 Due May 10