

## The Ethnographic Experience (ANT 200)

Time: MWF 1:15-2:15 pm  
Location: Cooper Rm. C-03  
Phone: 585-395-5705  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:15-3:15pm and Fridays, 10:45-11-45am

**Dr. Pilapa Esara**  
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### ***Course Description & Objectives:***

Through the power of words, writers create worlds. It is through their eyes, their histories and their biases that a place unseen is populated, the familiar is made strange and our own lives appear simple when compared to the published complexities of others. Is it not odd that those of us who have never set foot in Tokyo or Beverly Hills, nevertheless have images and ideas of its residents and their occupations. Why are some places so familiar in the popular imagination whereas other locales are not? On what grounds do we make certain assumptions about others whom we've only read about and heard about? How much of our general understanding about world issues is informed and dependent upon specialist-fieldworkers, like anthropologists and journalists, who have "been there and seen it"? By what criteria do we assess knowledge of other cultural contexts and which authors do we view as legitimate?

In this course, we will study anthropology as a discipline that has helped to construct our particular perspectives of the world. We will explore what it is that anthropologists do (research in a naturalistic setting) and produce (ethnographic information and anthropological theory) with consideration as to why and towards what ends. Specifically, we will focus on ethnography, as the written product of anthropological inquiry, and as a literary genre. This course is **reading-intensive**. Students will read several ethnographies (whole and excerpted) as well as scholarly articles of criticism and commentary. Class discussions will center upon issues of ethnographic research methods; interpretation and representation; the "ethnographic gaze"; the academy and scholarly production; and the distribution and implications of ethnographic knowledge.

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to...

- Describe changes in anthropology's disciplinary orientation as reflected in shifting writing styles
- Identify specific issues of interpretation, representation and authorship
- Present a persuasive argument for why a given text is "ethnographic"
- Explain the implications of "writing culture"

### ***Course Requirements:***

*Punctual attendance, active class participation, and the timely completion of all reading/submitted assignments* are expected of each student and required to earn a passing grade (though I hope students will strive for higher). Student performance in this course will be evaluated in accordance to the Department of Anthropology's *Guidelines for Student Evaluation* (available on ANGEL class site). Letter grades are calculated as follows: A: 100-94; A-:93-90; B+:89-87; B:86-84; B-:83-80; C+:79-77; C:76-74; C-:73-70; D+:69-67; D: 66-64; D-: 63-60; E:59-0. Additionally, I recommend that you read *Student Handbook* (<http://www.brockport.edu/publications/yrtk/>), which details college-wide policies concerning attendance, academic dishonesty, etc.

Evaluation of student performance includes the timely completion of the following tasks:

15 Class Participation (includes Discussion Starter)

15 Ethnographic Writing Exercise

50 5 Essay Assignments (10 pts each)

20 Paper

100 pts

#### *Late Assignment Policy*

Assignments must be submitted in hard-copy form at the start of the class in which it is due (unless otherwise stated). I do not accept late assignments except in pre-arranged circumstances and emergency situations as defined in the *Handbook*.

#### *Office hours & Contact Information*

Immediate questions and assignment-specific concerns are best addressed during office hours or through appointments. Email should only be used for *non-immediate* topics and responses can be expected in *2-3 business days*. I am happy to grant learning accommodations with prior notice.

#### *Academic Dishonesty*

“Academic dishonesty, ‘cheating’ and other forms of misrepresenting others’ work as your own, such as plagiarism, ... can result in a range of disciplinary actions including failure of a course or even conduct dismissal from the College.” (This text is excerpted from Chapter 7 of the *Handbook*.)

#### *Electronic Devices:*

Cell phones, PDAs, and other electronic devices should be turned off when in the classroom. Also, I do not allow note-taking on laptops in my classroom. If you would like note-taking assistance, please talk to me *and* the staff at the Student Learning Center.

#### ***Course Materials:***

Assigned course readings will be accessible through ANGEL Reserves (designated by brackets) **or** Library Reserves in Drake Memorial. For budget-minded students, consider sharing the cost and use of required books, or schedule time weekly to utilize the library reserves.

COURSE BOOKS: (Note: these books are referenced using APA style)

1. Lewis, Oscar. (1960). *Tepoztlan: Village in Mexico*. New York: Holt and Company.
2. Bowen, Elenore Smith. (1964). *Return to Laughter*. New York: Anchor Books.
3. Hurston, Zora Neale. (1935). *Mules and Men*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencott & Co.
4. Mead, Margaret. (1942). *And Keep Your Powder Dry: An Anthropologist Looks at America*. New York: William Morrow and Company.
5. Behar, Ruth. (2003). *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*. Boston: Beacon Press.

6. Farmer, Paul. (1993). *Aids and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame*. Berkeley, CA: University of California.
7. Tishkov, Valery. (2004). *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society*. Berkeley, CA: University of California.

Other readings can be found at ANGEL Reserves (under “Assignments” tab of website).

**Course Schedule:**

Reading and submitted assignments are due at the start of class *on the day* in which they are listed. Completion of a reading assignment includes not just the physical act of having read the text but includes comprehension of the material. When a reading assignment is not listed, the class session will focus on a previously assigned text. (Note: Schedule is subject to change with notice.)

**Week #1 –Anthropology: Studying and Understanding Culture**

*Monday, Jan. 26, 2009*

Welcome and Course Information

*Wednesday, Jan. 28<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Lewis, “Tepoztlan” Ch.1 – 4 (pp. 4-53)

*Friday, Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Lewis, “Tepoztlan” Ch. 5-8 (pp. 54-103)

**Week#2 - Fieldwork as method and identity**

*Monday, Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>*

Reading: Bowen, “Return to Laughter” Ch. 1-8 (pp. 1-100)

*Wednesday, Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Bowen, “Return to Laughter” Ch. 8-10 (pp. 101-143)

*Friday, Feb. 6<sup>th</sup>*

**Week#3 – The Anthropological World-View**

*Monday, Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Bowen, “Return to Laughter” Ch. 11-18 (pp. 144-250)

*Wednesday, Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Bowen, “Return to Laughter” Ch. 19-21 (pp. 251-297)

*Friday, Feb. 13<sup>th</sup>*

**Due: Essay Assignment #1**

**Week #4 - Writing About Culture ... folklore from the American South**

*Monday, Feb. 16<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Excerpts from Hurston, “Mules and Men” Folktales, Intro, Ch.1-2 (pp.9-41); Ch.4 (p.62-78); Ch. 9 (p140-152)

*Wednesday, Feb. 18<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Excerpts from Hurston, “Mules and Men” Hoodoo Ch.1-2 (pp.176—195); and Ch.4-6 (pp. 201-221)

*Friday, Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>*

**Week#5 – Writing About Culture...a critique of America in 1942**

*Monday, Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup>*

Reading: Excerpts from Mead, “Keep Your Powder Dry” Intro., Ch. 9 -10 and Ch. 12

*Wednesday, Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Excerpts from Mead, “Keep Your Powder Dry Ch. 13 &1 4

*Friday, Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>*

**Due: Essay Assignment #2**

**Week#6 – When an Interpretation Becomes the Representation**

*Monday, Mar. 2<sup>nd</sup>*

Reading: Farmer, “AIDS and Accusation” Ch. 1, Part I: Ch. 2-6, & Part II: Ch.7-8 (pp. 1-94)

*Wednesday, Mar. 4<sup>th</sup> Friday,*

Reading: Farmer, “AIDS and Accusation” Part II: Ch. 9-10 (pp. 95-123)

*Friday, Mar. 6<sup>th</sup>*

**Week#7 – Rethinking the Purpose of Ethnography (why we write)**

*Monday, Mar. 9<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Farmer, “AIDS and Accusation” Part III (pp. 121-150) & Part IV (pp. 151-190)

*Wednesday, Mar. 11<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Farmer, “AIDS and Accusation” Part V: Intro., Ch. 18 (pp. 191-207)

*Friday, Mar. 13<sup>th</sup>*

**Ethnographic Writing Check-in**

**WEEK 8 - SPRING BREAK**

*Monday, Mar. 16<sup>th</sup>*

*Wednesday, Mar. 18<sup>th</sup>*

*Friday, Mar. 20<sup>th</sup>*

**Week#9 – Ethnography as Advocacy**

*Monday, Mar. 23<sup>rd</sup>*

Reading: Farmer, “AIDS and Accusation” Part V: Ch. 19-22 (pp. 208-264)

*Wednesday, Mar. 25<sup>th</sup>*

*Friday, Mar. 27<sup>th</sup>*

**Due: Essay Assignment #3**

**Week#10 – The Ethnographic Gaze**

*Monday, Mar. 30<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Behar, “Translated Woman” Intro., Part I: Ch. 1-3 (pp. 1-107)

*Wednesday, Apr. 1<sup>st</sup>*

Reading: Behar, “Translated Woman” Part I: Ch. 4 (pp.108-125)

*Friday, Apr. 3<sup>rd</sup>*

**Due: Ethnographic Writing Exercise**

**Week#11 – Re-thinking Ethnography as a Genre**

*Monday, Apr. 6<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Behar, “Translated Woman” Part I: Ch. 5-6 (pp. 126-164) & Part II: Ch. 7-11 (pp. 167-222)

*Wednesday, Apr. 8<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Behar, “Translated Woman” Part III: Ch. 12-14 (pp. 225-264)

*Friday, Apr. 10<sup>th</sup>*

**Week#12 – Writing from the Margins**

*Monday, Apr. 13<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Behar, “Translated Woman” Part IV: Ch.15-17 (pp.267-342)

*Wednesday, Apr. 15<sup>th</sup>*

*Friday, Apr. 17<sup>th</sup>*

**Due: Essay Assignment #4**

**Week#13 – Writing Culture vs. Writing About Culture**

*Monday, Apr. 20<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Tishkov, “Chechnya” Ch. 1-4 (pp. 1-56)

*Wednesday, Apr. 22<sup>nd</sup>*

Reading: Tishkov, “Chechnya” Ch. 5-6 (pp. 57-89)

*Friday, Apr. 24<sup>th</sup>*

**Week#14 – Understanding and Representing Ethnic Conflict**

*Monday, Apr. 27<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Tishkov, “Chechnya” Ch. 7–9 (pp. 90-150)

*Wednesday, Apr. 29<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Tishkov, “Chechnya” Ch. 10–11 (pp. 151-179)

*Friday, May 1<sup>st</sup>.*

**Week#15 – Ethnography as Knowledge Production**

*Monday, May 4<sup>th</sup>*

Reading: Tishkov, “Chechnya” Ch. 12 – 14 (pp. 180-232)

*Wednesday, May 6<sup>th</sup>*

**Due: Essay Assignment #5**

*Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>*

Course Wrap-up – Revisit the Purpose of Anthropology and who reads Ethnography

**Paper DUE on the Final Exam Day, May 12<sup>th</sup>**

**in my departmental mailbox (Cooper C-12) by 3:30pm**