

ANTH 1000W

Other People's Worlds

(Honors Section)

THIS COURSE shows you how to identify cultures, differentiate one from another, and explore how cultures accomplish goals. Perhaps the most important characteristic of human nature is that we cannot accomplish a goal without participating in one or another culture. Indeed, we cannot *not* participate in cultures. In this sense, cultures are built into us. We can't wish cultures away. Our brains produce them in the normal course of their operation. Indeed, we accomplish goals *only* if we participate in a culture designed to allow us to accomplish that goal. Moreover, global movement and communication have placed you face-to-face with individuals who embody different cultures. But appearances deceive. Some people we *think* embody different cultures *don't*. Some people who look just like you show *radical* differences once they act.

Six learning modules make up the course:

1. you will identify the basic components of cultures.
2. you will describe how the assumptions, norms, and coordinated patterns of behavior that make up a specific culture accomplish goals.
3. you will describe and differentiate two of the cultures in which you participate.
4. you will elicit sufficient information about at least one other culture, not your own, that allows you to describe that culture and differentiate it from your own.
5. you will analyze the similarities and differences between your culture and the one you learned about.
6. finally, you will analyze the similarities and differences between these cultures and the distinctive features of Western culture identified by Victor Davis Hanson.

REQUIREMENTS: Active participation in class discussions and a series of written assignments that culminate in a paper (12 pt font, single spaced) of *4,000 - 5,000 words*. You must write acceptably well or you will fail this course.

For a C, write clearly and with details from the readings and discussions. Write concisely with active verbs. For example, clear description of different cultural norms (shared beliefs about what one should or should not do), each of which you state clearly and derive from different assumptions, warrants a C. Poor descriptions and poorly written descriptions receive below a C. Your grade will shift from a C to a B as you add details that make it clear that you thoroughly understand the constructs you write about. Details include descriptions and examples of the coordinated patterns of activity and the bodies of knowledge (what you know and how to do things) that accompany the norms and assumptions. Your grade will shift from a B to an A as you add breadth and specifics that make it clear that you have begun to see the wider implications of the issues you write about. I will assign grades as points (e.g., 2.0=C, 3.0=B, 3.3=B+, A=4.0, B+/A-=3.5). Late submissions default to a grade of 0.0 Use Strunk & White's *The Elements of Style* as your guide to good writing.

Produce arguments, not opinions. Opinions don't count because we have no reason to think they're any more than your fantasy. Arguments count to the extent that they (1) contain no logical fallacies and (2) provide

evidence (the stronger the better) that a claim corresponds with a set of observations. Critically evaluate your own argument, and those of others. Critical evaluations do *not* consist of statements like “I don't believe you,” or “I don't understand,” or “you should have written on something else,” or “but that doesn't account for this contradictory example.” No one cares what you 'believe' unless you can justify the belief with evidence. It's your responsibility to get the information so you do understand. It's not your business to tell someone else what topic to write on. And instances do not invalidate generalizations. Critical evaluations consist of statements like “This argument doesn't make sense, and here's why – [cite and explain the logical fallacies and/or evidence weaknesses],” or “This argument makes sense, and here's why – [cite and explain its strengths in logic and evidence].”

In summary, your course grade will come from the following:

Modules 1-6 – 60%: 5 short descriptive exercises and 2 fieldnote submissions.

Final – 40%: a paper that integrates your earlier descriptive and analytical submissions in ways that allow you to see the historical foundations of these cultures. Your last assignment will thus count as your Final, from which I will evaluate your mastery of the concepts and skills that are part of the course.

WHO AM I?

Penn Handwerker graduated from Willamette University in 1966 with a B.A. and from the University of Oregon in 1971 with a PhD. I taught at the University of Oregon, Washington State University, and Humboldt State University before coming to the University of Connecticut as a Professor of Anthropology in 1994. I trained as a general anthropologist with an emphasis on the intersection of biological and cultural anthropology, and have published in all five fields (applied, archaeology, biological, cultural, and linguistics) of anthropology. I have conducted field research in

- West Africa (~3 years residence in Liberia, with short excursions to Sierra Leone, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, during 1968, 1969-70, 1977-78, 1984),
- the West Indies (5+ years residence, in Barbados during 1985, 1986, 1990, 1991, and 1992, Antigua during 1988 and 1989, and St. Lucia during 1986 and 1990),
- the Russian Far East (Chukotka in 1995),
- and various portions of the contemporary United States (Oregon, California's North Coast, Connecticut, and Alaska).

I developed new methods with which to study cultures while I studied topics that included the causes and consequences of entrepreneurship in both food production and marketing, public sector corruption, high fertility and fertility transition, and both inter- and intragenerational power differences. My current research focuses on the possibility that the most effective collective action for community sustainability reflects the cultural assumption that each person knows what's best for him or herself. For more information, see <http://www.anth.uconn.edu/faculty/handwerker/>

WHO ARE YOU?

Please tell us a little about yourself – send me an email with a short bio. I will assemble the set and send them around to all class members.

ORIENTATION (AUG 31)

LEARNING MODULE 1 (SEPT 14). WHAT IS A CULTURE?

Learning goal: Identify basic characteristics of culture:

- consists of shared assumptions, shared understandings about what we should and not do (which we call cultural norms), and coordinated patterns of behavior – plus bodies of knowledge about the things of our world and how they operate, including how to make things happen.
- identifiable only by reference to specific assumptions, norms, and patterns of behavior
- individuals embody multiple cultures, some named, some not, some global, some local

BOHANNAN & VAN DER ELST, *ASKING & LISTENING*, PART I. (WAVELAND, 1998). ISBN: 0-88133-987-3
HANDWERKER, *THE ORIGIN OF CULTURES*, CHAPTERS 1 & 3. (LEFT COAST, 2009) ISBN: 1-59874-068-4

DUE SEPT 21ST: a 500 word (maximum) description of the assumptions, norms, and coordinated patterns of behavior of a culture.

LEARNING MODULE 2 (SEPT 21, 28). HOW DO CULTURES MAKE YOU DO THINGS?

Learning goal: describe how the assumptions, norms, and coordinated patterns of behavior that make up a specific culture accomplish goals

CHRISTOPHER R. BROWNING, *ORDINARY MEN* (HARPER, 1998) ISBN: 0-06-099506-8
<http://www.rachellucas.com/index.php/2009/08/24/we-have-to-go-into-the-despair-and-go-beyond-it-by-working-and-doing-for-somebody-else-by-using-it-for-something-else/>

DUE SEPT 28TH: a 500 word (maximum) description of the assumptions, norms, and coordinated patterns of behavior of an effective team. How does an effective team differ from an ineffective one? Examine the question: do you really have choices? When and under what circumstances (specifically) do you NOT have choices?

LEARNING MODULE 3 (OCT 5). TO WHICH CULTURES DO YOU BELONG?

Learning goal: describe two sets of assumptions, norms, and coordinated patterns of behavior that make up a two of your cultures.

You make it easiest on yourself if you start with a cultural norm, like

- health care *should* be considered a fundamental human right.
- A woman *should* have the final say over her pregnancy.

Evaluate related questions like, if 'health care' is a right, why wasn't it recognized in Ancient Greece, or in England in 1780? If a woman should not have a final say over her pregnancy, why was it practiced in Ancient Greece – indeed, in every human community we know of? How did the idea of 'health-care-as-a-right' come into existence – in response to the overpopulation and over-consumption that threatens to destroy our planet, which abortion helped control in earlier human societies? Why should people not be left to die on the street – other than that they have a right to health care? If health care is so important, to save the 30,000 people who otherwise die, shouldn't we develop a market in human kidneys? If you should not be forced to participate in a market for kidneys why should you be forced to participate in the market for infants we call 'adoption'?

DUE OCT 5TH: a 500 word (maximum) essay that identifies two (sets of) assumptions, the norms they rationalize, and the coordinated patterns of behavior they produce.

LEARNING MODULE 4 (OCT 12, 19, AND 26). HOW, EXACTLY, DO OTHER PEOPLE'S CULTURES DIFFER?

Learning goal: elicit sufficient information about at least one other culture to describe the assumptions, norms, and coordinated patterns of behavior that differentiate this culture from one of your own.

Given UConn's metanoia topic, ask people about a simple prescription that will stop violence against women almost entirely: help everyone

1. attain clarity about the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable (violent) behavior.
2. attain competence in at least one martial art (like judo or the art of the gun).
3. build social networks filled with people who assume that friends and relatives should actively protect each other.

BOHANNAN & VAN DER ELST, *ASKING & LISTENING*, PART III

DUE OCT 19TH: bring to class a 6pp+ write-up of notes based on an interview with at least two people.

DUE OCT 26TH: bring to class a 12pp+ write-up of notes based on more interviews.

LEARNING MODULE 5 (NOV 2, 9). DESCRIBE TWO CULTURES AND ANALYZE THE DIFFERENCES

Learning goal: describe the norms and coordinated patterns of behavior of one of your cultures and another culture, and describe how the differences stem from differences in assumptions.

BOHANNAN & VAN DER ELST, *ASKING & LISTENING*, PART IV

DUE NOV 9TH: a draft of a paper that integrates your first two essays with an analysis of your field notes.

LEARNING MODULE 6 (NOV 16, 30, AND DEC 7). WHERE ARE YOUR CULTURES TAKING YOU?

Learning goal: identify the foundations of one or both of these cultures in the distinctive assumptions and features of Western culture.

VICTOR DAVIS HANSON, *CARNAGE & CULTURE* (ANCHOR, 2001) ISBN: 0-385-72038-6 – CHAPTERS 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, EPILOGUE, AFTERWORD

DUE NOV 30TH: a 500 word (maximum) description of the similarities and differences between these cultures and the distinctive features of Western culture identified by Victor Davis Hanson.

DECEMBER 14TH – OUR FINAL:

Submit your paper (40% of your grade), which integrates the material you submitted Nov. 9th with the material you submitted Nov. 30th.