

## ANTH 1a: Introduction to Comparative Study of Human Societies

**Class Schedule:** Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: 11:20 AM – 1:40 PM

**Instructor:** Syed Taha Kaleem (he/him), email: [tahakaleem@brandeis.edu](mailto:tahakaleem@brandeis.edu)

**Office Hours:** By email

**Syllabus is subject to change and students will be informed in advance about the changes**

### Course description:

This course introduces the principal ideas and methods of social and cultural anthropology, the comparative study of human societies in all their remarkable diversity and complexity. The special mandate of the field is to discover new and less harmful ways of perceiving and understanding the different experiences, histories, and values of people and communities from all parts of the world. Anthropology also examines how categories of difference and inequality are constructed in our own and other societies, including the often-pernicious effects of hierarchies tied to class, caste, race, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, nation, and citizenship in human societies. The course is designed to examine the ways people make sense of and order their lives within a range of societies, including in North and South America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Oceania. It emphasizes that other possibilities, beyond the ones we are most familiar with, exist for solving problems and for achieving meaningful lives.

The course will introduce you to the concepts of cultural analysis, fieldwork (how anthropologists gather data), and ethnography (the written account of the study of a social setting). We will explore key features of social-cultural life, including meaning and values, social inequalities, language and communication, kinship and relatedness, gender and sexuality, political and economic systems, religion and ritual, sickness and healing, and social change. The course will explore as well the theme of globalization, from the period of European colonial expansion, when anthropology first came into being, to the current global era, when many societies have become increasingly part of a world-embracing political, economic, and cultural community.

The course serves as a core requirement for majors in Anthropology and International and Global Studies. The course also fulfills the Difference and Justice in the World (DJW) requirement for the general education curriculum.

### The central learning goals of the course are to:

- Gain insight into the diverse ways people around the world find meaning and make sense of their lives, thereby also illuminating one's own taken-for-granted assumptions
- Understand inequalities in relations of power within and among the world's societies and nations in the past and present
- Gain knowledge of the major questions, concepts, theories, ethical issues, and methodologies of anthropology as a social science discipline
- Develop skills in interviewing and/or participant observation research (research methodologies to be used in several of the course assignments)
- Hone skills in critical thinking, analytic writing, and collaborative discussion
- Understand how anthropology can be used in a variety of professional contexts

### Required readings

All readings will be uploaded to LATTE. Readings will amount to approximately 50-100 pages per week. **Please complete the reading *on or before* the class date listed in the syllabus.**

“Recommended” readings are optional, if you have interest or to help with a particular paper topic.

### Required Books:

- Podolefsky, Aaron and Peter J. Brown, eds. 2012. *Applying Cultural Anthropology: An Introductory Reader*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. [Note: Earlier editions of the book will contain many, but not all, of the assigned articles, and the page numbers will be different. Some students check out the book from reserve and copy at once all the assigned chapters. Used and rental copies are also available through various online sources and the Brandeis bookstore.]
- Ménoret, Pascal. *Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

### Course Requirements

1. **Discussion Posts: 20%**
2. **Class Participation and Attendance: 20%**
3. **Observation Paper: 40%**
4. **Final Paper: 20%**

### Discussion Posts

- You are required to make **10** discussion posts of a minimum 100 words before every class throughout the course duration. You are also required to respond to one of your peers' posts to earn a full score. You can pick any 10 classes to write your discussion posts on.

### Class Participation and Attendance

- Since this class meets over zoom. You are required to keep your cameras always open. If you are unable to do this, please reach out to me.
- Attendance is taken seriously. Each class builds on the next, so if you miss a class your comprehension of the material will suffer. Full attendance is also essential for establishing a productive learning community and class dynamic. For the final exam you will be responsible for material discussed in lectures but not appearing in the readings.
- However, we understand that things come up during the semester that can prevent you from coming to class (family emergencies, delayed flights, illness, job interviews, etc.). As a result, you may miss two classes (which includes sections, so missing one lecture and one section equals two absences) without it affecting your grade. However, *for each additional class that you miss, the attendance portion of your participation grade will be reduced by five points.*
- Please note: Since we give you two freebies, this class does not have a system of “excused” or “unexcused” absences, so please refrain from contacting the professor about reasons for missing class (other than a major medical emergency requiring an extended absence from the university).

### Observation Paper

- These will be short (rather informal and engaging) mini fieldwork exercises in which you will be asked to observe particular kinds of social-cultural practices in the environments surrounding you, and to write up a 2-page *description* and *analysis* of the phenomena, drawing on *course concepts*. You will submit **4** observation papers over the duration of the course.
- These papers will be due on the following dates
  - o **Paper 1: Sunday; July 14, 2024**
  - o **Paper 2: Sunday; July 21, 2024**
  - o **Paper 3: Sunday; July 28, 2024**
  - o **Paper 4: Sunday; August 4, 2024**

### Final Paper

- You will be required to write 1500 words essay on one of the topics from a list provided to you by the instructor.
- I am happy to meet you over zoom to discuss paper outlines. However, I won't be able to read a full draft of the paper.

### Grading

All assignments are graded on a 100-point scale (which allows for finer distinctions than letter grades) and there will be a grading rubric distributed for the written assignments and tests in advance. At the end of the semester, final grades (out of 100) will be calculated according to the weight of each assignment (e.g. if you get an 88 on one of the written assignments, it will be recorded as an 8.8 in the final grade -- 10% of 80).

The conversion of numerical to letter grades will be according to the following scale:

97-100	A+
93.5-96.9	A
90-93.4	A-
87-89.9	B+
83.5-86.9	B
80-83.4	B-
77-79.9	C+
73.5-76.9	C
70-73.4	C-
67-69.9	D+
63.5-66.9	D
60-63.4	D-
0-60	E

**The Writing Center:**

The University Writing Center provides free one-on-one sessions to help with your papers. It is located in Goldfarb 232 on the Mezzanine Level of the library, and virtual appointments are also available. You are encouraged to take advantage of this service. Please find more information and schedule an appointment online:

<https://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/writingcenter/scheduleanappointment.html>

**Academic Integrity:**

You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity (see section 4: “Maintenance of Academic Integrity”--

[http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srcs/rr/RR14\\_15version11.4.pdf](http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srcs/rr/RR14_15version11.4.pdf)). Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Remember, you must indicate through quotations and citation when quoting from any outside source (internet, AI, or print).

**Note: Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to produce content, when an assignment does not explicitly call or allow for it, is plagiarism—the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as one’s own. This is an actionable Academic Integrity offense at Brandeis.**

“A student’s name on any written exercise ... constitutes a representation that the work is the result of that student’s own thought and study.” -- <https://www.brandeis.edu/student-rights-community-standards/rights-responsibilities/current/section-4.html>

**Accommodations:**

Brandeis seeks to create a learning environment that is welcoming and inclusive of all students, and I want to support you in your learning. If you think you may require disability accommodations, you will need to work with Student Accessibility Support (SAS) (781-736-3470, [access@brandeis.edu](mailto:access@brandeis.edu)). You can find helpful student FAQs and other resources on the [SAS website](#), including guidance on how to know whether you might be eligible for support from SAS. If you already have an accommodation letter from SAS, please provide me with a copy as soon as you can so that I can ensure effective implementation of accommodations for this class. In order to coordinate exam accommodations, ideally you should provide the accommodation letter at least 48 hours before an exam.

Brandeis also has some resources available in an emergency for assisting in purchasing technology and books, to assist students in need. The form is here: <https://www.brandeis.edu/student-financialservices/financial-aid/emergency-funding.html> and the email is [emergencyfund@brandeis.edu](mailto:emergencyfund@brandeis.edu).

## Week 1

### Monday: July 8, 2024

- Clifford Geertz, "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man," focus on pp. 8-14 (sections III and IV)
- M.R. Trouillot, "Adieu Culture: A New Duty Arises" focus on pp. 347-351

### Tuesday: July 9, 2024

- Bohannon, Laura: "Shakespeare in the Bush" (ACA): pp. 5-10 (and on LATTE)
- Abu-Lughod, Lila: "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others" (ACA): pp. 133-139. (and on LATTE)

### Wednesday: July 10, 2024

- Abusharaf, Rogaiya Mustafa. "Revisiting feminist discourses on infibulation: Responses from Sudanese feminists." *Female "circumcision" in Africa: Culture, controversy and change* (2000): 151-66.
- Miner, Horace: "Body Ritual among the Nacirema" (ACA): pp. 64-67 (and on LATTE)

### Thursday: July 11, 2024

- Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description" [entire article but focus on marked passages on 311-315 and 317-318]
- Ralph, Laurence. "Preface" to *Renegade Dreams: Living through Injury in Gangland Chicago* (University of Chicago Press, 2014): pp. xvii-xx. (LATTE)

### Observation Paper 1 Due: Sunday July 14, 2024

## Week 2

### Monday: July 15, 2024

- David S. Thomson, "The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis: Worlds Shaped by Words," in *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, James Spradley and David McCurdy, eds. (2003 [1975]): pp. 78-90. (LATTE)
- Keith Basso, "'To Give up on Words': Silence in Western Apache Culture" (ACA): pp. 36-45.

### Tuesday: July 16, 2024

- Brian Horton, "What's So 'Queer' about Coming Out? Silent Queers and Theorizing Kinship Agonistically in Mumbai." *Sexualities* 2018, Vol. 21(7) 1059-1074. (LATTE)

- Melvyn C. Goldstein, "When Brothers Share a Wife" (ACA): pp. 27-31.

### Wednesday: July 17, 2024

- Ortner, Sherry B. "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" *In* Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, eds., *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford University Press, 1974): pp. 68-87. (LATTE)
- Evelyn Blackwood, "Tombois in West Sumatra: Constructing Masculinity and Erotic Desire." *Cultural Anthropology* 13(4) (Nov. 1998): 491-521 → **OK to read pp. 494-499 only.** (LATTE)

### Thursday: July 18, 2024

- McGlotten, Shaka. "A brief and improper geography of queerspaces and sexpublics in Austin, Texas." *Gender, Place & Culture* 21, no. 4 (2014): 471-488
- Dutta, Aniruddha. "On Queerly Hidden Lives: Precarity and (In) visibility between Formal and Informal Economies in India." *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 5, no. 3 (2018): 61-75.

**Observation Paper 2 Due: Sunday July 21, 2024**

## Week 3

### Monday: July 22, 2024

- Finkelstein, Maura, and Maura Finkelstein. "What is a Classroom for? Teaching the Anthropology of Palestine." *Society for Cultural Anthropology* (2019).

### Tuesday: July 23, 2024

- Mahmood Mamdani (2001) *A Brief History of Genocide*. Transition, No. 87, pp. 26-47

### Wednesday: July 24, 2024

- Silver, Jake. "Familiar Pixels: Imag (in) Ing the Dead and the Political in Israel/Palestine." *American Anthropologist* 123, no. 1 (2021): 120-136.
- Bishara, Amahl. "Palestinian acts of speaking together, apart: Subalternities and the politics of fracture." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6, no. 3 (2016): 305-330.

### Thursday: July 25, 2024

- Atshan, Sa'ed. "The anthropological rise of Palestine." *Journal of Palestine studies* 50, no. 4 (2021): 3-31.

**Observation Paper 3 Due: Sunday July 28, 2024**

## Week 4

### Monday: July 29, 2024

- Ménoret, Pascal. *Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. (Chapter 1 and 2)

### Tuesday: July 30, 2024

- Ménoret, Pascal. *Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. (Chapter 3 and 4)

### Wednesday: July 31, 2024

- Ménoret, Pascal. *Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. (Chapter 5 and 6)

### Thursday: August 1, 2024

- Ménoret, Pascal. "Learning from Riyadh: Automobility, joyriding, and politics." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 39, no. 1 (2019): 131-142.

**Observation Paper 4 Due: Sunday August 4, 2024**

## Week 5

### Monday: August 5, 2024

- Jobson, Ryan Cecil. "The case for letting anthropology burn: Sociocultural anthropology in 2019." *American Anthropologist* 122, no. 2 (2020): 259-271.

### Tuesday: August 6, 2024

- Kolshus, Thorgeir. "The power of ethnography in the public sphere." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, no. 1 (2017): 61-69.

### Wednesday: August 7, 2024

- Speed, Shannon. "At the crossroads of human rights and anthropology: Toward a critically engaged activist research." *American Anthropologist* 108, no. 1 (2006): 66-76.

### Thursday: August 8, 2024

- Marcus, George E. "On the unbearable slowness of being an anthropologist now: Notes on a contemporary anxiety in the making of ethnography." *Cross Cultural Poetics* 12, no. 12 (2003): 7-20.

**Final Papers Due: August 15, 2024**

