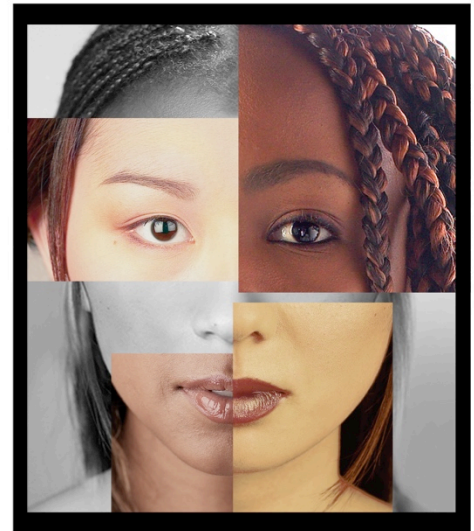


**ANTH-110 Culture and Human Experience**  
**(3 credits = 15 hours expected work per week)**

**Professor:** Siobhán McGuirk  
**Virtual Office:** Google Hangout: Siobhán McGuirk  
Skype: Siobhán McGuirk  
*Please mention course code ANTH 110  
when requesting to add me as a contact*

**Virtual Office Hours:** Tuesday, 5-7pm (EST)  
Wednesday, 12-2pm (EST)  
and by appointment

**Contact:** Siobhan.McGuirk@american.edu  
**Response time:** I will respond to emails within 24 hours  
I will return coursework within 60 hours



*Image from the American Anthropological Association's project Race: Are we so different?*

**I. COURSE DESCRIPTION, OBJECTIVES AND STRUCTURE**

**Course Description:**

*What is anthropology? What is culture?* This course introduces sociocultural anthropology and explores how it can help us understand today's critical political, economic, and social questions. We will learn the theory, history, and methods of the discipline, and consider how anthropology can help us make sense of issues like poverty and inequality, race and racism, gender, sexuality, and violence and conflict around the world.

We will explore and understand culture through the defining methodology of anthropology: ethnography. A central goal of the course is to provide students with an understanding of the basic tenets and debates of contemporary cultural anthropology, as well as a critical and informed knowledge of the concept of "culture."

Topics covered include fieldwork, families, religion, gender, sexuality, transnational connections and relationships. The examples covered in this class will draw from peoples and cultures around the world and at different points in time.

**Important Note on Online Summer Courses:**

This is an intensive course. We're packing three credits into only seven weeks. You should expect to work **15 hours per week** on this course, and plan your time accordingly. I will be assigning lot of readings, videos, regular small tasks and larger assignments. It is your responsibility to keep track of deadlines and to work to schedule – read this syllabus carefully.

Many of you will be used to interacting online, which should help you in this environment. However, do not forget that this online course is still a formal educational setting. I expect all students to be professional, punctual, respectful and thoughtful in their attitude and language use.

### Course Objectives:

In this course, you will enhance your critical thinking, reading and writing skills. In particular, you will learn what anthropology is and how the discipline conducts research using ethnography. You will be able to consider social, political and economic issues from a culturally relative perspective. You will also learn how structural factors shape human lives and decisions, and how differences such as race, class, gender, nationality, and economic status shape the way that we understand the world around us.

### Learning Outcomes:

Through successful completion of this course, you will enhance your critical thinking, reading and writing skills. In particular, you will be able to:

- Describe what anthropology is, and explain how the discipline conducts research using ethnography
- Practice some basic ethnographic research skills
- Critically evaluate the meaning of the term “culture”
- Summarize and synthesize some of the key debates in anthropology
- Analyze social, political and economic issues from a culturally relative perspective
- Evaluate and explain how structural factors shape human lives and decisions, and how differences such as race, class, gender, nationality, and economic status shape the way that we make sense of our lives

I have designed assignments and grading rubrics to measure how successfully you meet these outcomes.

### Required Textbooks/Other Materials:

**All readings and other materials will be posted to Blackboard.** These will be organized into folders for each week. There are no required textbooks for this course.

I have chosen readings for this course from a range of sources. These will act as an anchor for discussion, to be complimented by film clips, lecture slides, articles, and experiential learning. Our readings and discussions will address topics that some may find controversial and that may challenge cherished beliefs, spiritual and personal. We must all make a special effort to be tolerant of all opinions. After all, it is the diversity of those opinions is what makes anthropology fascinating!

### **My Expectations of You:**

*Ongoing engagement is crucial to success* in this class. I expect advance notice for any work you will miss or will be delayed handing in, for medical reasons (with a doctor's note), family emergency, or observation of a religious holiday – although I expect you to plan ahead in the latter case. More than 2 missed small assignments (such as your discussion question) and any missed large assignments will *seriously* affect your grade.

Being habitually late to submit work – including discussion participation – will also affect your grade. Be considerate of your classmates and engage with them *on time*.

In addition to written assignments, *careful reading and active participation in discussions are the most important elements of this course*. Active participation requires thoughtful engagement with your peers. Sign on to Blackboard / class activities ready to discuss course materials, read others' comments carefully and to interact with your classmates. You will be graded on the quality, rather than the quantity of your participation.

See rubrics and guides on Blackboard for a more in-depth explanation of my expectations for each assignment.

### **What You Can Expect of Me:**

You will be able to contact me via email, skype, Google Hangouts and/ or BlackBoard. I will respond promptly to your questions, and I will engage with your ideas and comments thoughtfully and respectfully. I will remain open to feedback throughout the semester, and be responsive to your requests to clarify and/ or further explain concepts and other teaching points. I will give you sufficient notice of any changes to syllabus, but will aim as far as possible to stick to what you see here.

## II. CLASS SCHEDULE

### Part One: Introducing Anthropology

#### **Week 1 (May 11 – May 17): What is “culture”? What is “ethnography”?**

*Watch:*

- Micro Lecture: Introducing the Course

*Read:*

- Balee, William (2012) *Inside Cultures: A New Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*. Left Coast Press. pp.15-23.
- Geertz, Clifford (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books. Excerpts.
- “Arrival Stories” Selected excerpts from ethnographies by Theodore Bestor, Philippe Bourgois, João Biehl, E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Clifford Geertz, Bronislaw Malinowski, Laura Nader.

*Watch:*

- *Cannibal Tours*

*Assignments due:*

- Monday, May 11, 9pm EST: “About me!” – introduce yourself, and post a photo (or avatar of your choosing) to the Blackboard discussion board.
- Tuesday, May 12, 9pm EST: Discussion question
- Friday, May 15, 9pm EST: Discussion responses (2)
- Sunday, May 17, 9pm EST: Critical reflection

#### **Week 2 (May 18 – 24): Gift Exchange**

*Watch:*

- Micro Lecture: Building Connections – anthropological theory and methods

*Read:*

- Mauss, Marcel. (1967) [1925]. Prestation, Gift and Potlatch; Distribution of the System. In *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. New York: Norton: 3-5, 17-45.
- Stack, Carol B. (1975). Swapping. In *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*. New York: Harper & Row, pp: 32-44.
- Schensul, Stephen L., Sensul, Jean J., LeCompte, Margaret D (1999) “Guiding Principles” and “Entering the Field” in *Essential Ethnographic Methods: Observations, Interviews and Questionnaires* Lanham: Altamira Press. Selected excerpts.

*Watch:*

- *Onka’s Big Moka* [part 1]
- What Is Ethnographic Fieldwork (this will be your guide to your Fieldnotes Assignment – pay attention!)

*Review:*

- Template: How to annotate fieldnotes

*Assignments due:*

- Tuesday, May 19, 9pm EST: Discussion question
- Friday, May 22, 9pm EST: Discussion responses (2)
- Sunday, May 24, 9pm EST: Critical reflection

**Week 3 (May 25 – 31): Ritual, symbolism and cosmologies**

*Watch:*

- Micro Lecture: Making meaning, constructing norms

*Read:*

- Douglas, Mary. (1991) [1966]. Introduction and Secular Defilement. In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. New York: Routledge: pp.1-6, 30-41.
- Turner, Victor (2010) [1967] "Ritual Symbolism, Morality and Social Structure among the Ndembu" In *Ritual and Belief: Readings in the Anthropology of Religion*, David Hicks (ed.) Lanham: AltaMira Press, pp. 94-104
- Miner, Horace (1956) "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema" *The American Anthropologist*. 58: 503-507

*Listen:*

- NPR Podcast on "Baseball Magic"

*Assignments due:*

- Tuesday, May 26, 9pm EST: Discussion question
- Friday, May 29, 9pm EST: Discussion responses (2)
- Sunday, May 31, 9pm EST: Annotated Field Notes essay

**Part Two: Categorizes, Hierarchies And Power**

**Week 4 (June 1 – 7): Gender, Sex and Sexuality**

*Watch:*

- Micro Lecture: Challenging Binaries

*Read:*

- Gottlieb, Alma (2002) "Interpreting Gender and Sexuality: Approaches from Cultural Anthropology" In *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the front lines*, Jeremy MacClancy (ed.) Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 167-189.
- Martin, Emily (1991) "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles." *Signs* 16(3): 485-501.
- Kulick, Don (1997) "The Gender of Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes." *American Anthropologist* 99 (3): 574-585.

*Watch:*

- Killing Us Softly [clip]
- XX/XY

*Assignments due:*

- Tuesday, June 2, 9pm EST: Discussion question
- Friday, June 5, 9pm EST: Discussion responses (2)
- Sunday, June 7, 9pm EST: Critical reflection

**Week 5 (June 8 – 14): Race, racialization and racism**

*Read:*

- Jonathan Marks (1994) "Black, White, Other." *Natural History*, pp. 32-35.
- Sacks, Karen Brodtkin (1994) "How Did Jews Become White Folks?" In *Race*, Roger Sanjek and Steven Gregory, (eds.) pp. 78-102.
- Pager, Devah (2003) "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *Focus* 23 (2): pp. 44-46.

*Listen:*

- The Artist in American Life Podcast: Racism in early superhero comics

*Explore:*

- The AAA website "Race: Are We So Different" [[understandingrace.org](http://understandingrace.org)]

*Watch:*

- Micro Lecture: (De)constructing Race

*Assignments due:*

- Tuesday, June 9, 9pm EST: Discussion question
- Friday June 12, 9pm EST: Discussion responses (2)
- Sunday, June 14, 9pm EST: Critical reflection

**Week 6 (June 15 – 21): Globalization, humanitarianism and cultural change**

*Read:*

- Appadurai, Arjun. (1990). "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *Theory Culture Society* 7: 295-310.
- Theodore C. Bestor (2000) "How Sushi Went Global" *Foreign Policy* pp. 54-63.

*Watch:*

- *Abloni*
- Micro Lecture: How are we "connected"?

*Read:*

- Abu-Lughod, Lila (2002) "Do Muslim Women Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others." *American Anthropologist* 104 (3): 783-790.
- Biddle, Pippa (2014) "The Problem With Little White Girls (And Boys): Why I Stopped Being A Voluntourist" Published online at [pippabiddle.com](http://pippabiddle.com), on February 18, 2014.

*Assignments due:*

- Tuesday June 16, 9pm EST: Discussion question
- Friday June 19, 9pm EST: Discussion responses (2)
- Sunday June 21, 9pm EST: Cultural Analysis Project

**Week 7 (June 22 – 25): Can anthropology change the way we think about the world?**

*Reading due:*

- Gomberg-Muñoz, Ruth (2013). “2012 Public Anthropology Year in Review: Actually, Rick, Florida Could Use a Few More Anthropologists.” *American Anthropologist* 115(2): 286-296.
- Selected readings from “Ebola in Perspective,” a special collection of articles edited by Mary Moran and Daniel Hoffmann, published online by *Cultural Anthropology*, October 7, 2014.
- Vine, David. “Homesick for Camp Justice.” *Mother Jones*, August 21, 2008.

*Watch:*

- Ethnographic Film – clips from the Granada Center for Visual Anthropology

*Assignments due:*

- Tuesday, June 22, 9pm EST: Discussion – reflections on the course
- Thursday, June 25, 5pm EST: Final exam (Questions released Monday, June 22, 9am)

NOTE THE DATE OF YOUR EXAM!

### III. CLASS DETAILS: ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING BREAKDOWN

#### Assignments:

You will be graded on four areas – **(1) thoughtful participation, (2) critical reflections, (3) two short essays** and **(4) a final exam**.

**Thoughtful participation (Discussion Boards):** Each week, you will submit **one** discussion question to the Blackboard Discussion Board by Tuesday, 9pm EST. These should be based on one or a combination of the assigned readings. You will join another discussion thread / reply to **at least two** other students' discussion questions or replies by Friday, 9pm EST.

**Critical reflections:** I will assign a prompt for critical reflection each Monday, at 9am. You will write a response, maximum 150 words to be submitted by the following Sunday, at 9pm EST. These should be written in a word document (or equivalent), using double spaced texted, in 12-point font, with 1 inch margins. Please include your name on the document.

**Essays:** There will be two major assignments to submit over the course of the semester. The first will be Annotated Field Notes (due Sunday, May 31, 9pm EST) of an event, ritual, ceremony or routine taking place in your local community. The second will be a Cultural Analysis video/ virtual presentation (due Sunday, June 21, 9pm EST), in which you examine a television clip or advertisement of your choosing. I will post further details of these assignments to Blackboard.

**Final exam:** This will take the form of five short answer questions (1-2 sentences) and 2 short essays (3-4 paragraphs), covering materials covered over the course. The exam questions will be released via Blackboard on Monday June 22 at 9am, and are due by Thursday 25 June, 5pm EST.

#### Submitting assignments:

You will upload your assignments through Blackboard. Please see the instructional video in the Announcements page of our course Blackboard site for detailed instructions. You should watch this in good time before your first assignment is due.

#### Grading:

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

|                          |     |                |  |
|--------------------------|-----|----------------|--|
| Thoughtful participation | 21% | (3% each week) | Due each Tuesday/ Friday, 9pm EST                                |
| 4 Critical reflections   | 20% | (5% each week) | Due each Sunday, 9pm EST (except when other assignments are due) |
| Annotated Field Notes    | 19% |                | Due: May 31, 9pm EST   |
| Cultural Analysis        | 20% |                | Due: June 21, 9pm EST  |
| Final exam               | 20% |                | Due: June 25, 5pm EST  |
| Improvement/ effort      | 5   | bonus points   |  |



**Grades:**

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Excellent: accurate, original and thoughtful | 100-90 (A)   |
| Good: engaged and competent                  | 89-80 (B)    |
| Satisfactory                                 | 79-70 (C)    |
| Unsatisfactory or incomplete                 | 69-60 (D)    |
| Failure to meet minimum course requirements  | 59 and below |

**How to access grades:**

You can check your grades by clicking “My Grades” under Course Tools on Blackboard, after the grade for each assessment task is released.

**Rubrics (how I will grade your work):**

There are different rubrics for each assignment. These are posted on Blackboard, under the “Information” tab.

**IV. OFFICIAL BUSINESS: UNIVERSITY POLICIES ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, SUPPORT SERVICES AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

**General Education Credit:**

There are no prerequisites for this course. It is part of the foundational courses in Curricular Area 3, Global and Multicultural Perspectives, in the university’s General Education Program. Please see your academic advisor if you have questions about your eligibility for Gen Ed enrollment in this class.

**Course Evaluation:**

As required by AU academic regulations, every student must complete an evaluation for each enrolled course at the end of the semester. A link to an online instructional assessment form will be emailed to you for your confidential use.

**ONLINE COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Technical Requirements:**

In addition to a confident level of computer and Internet literacy, certain minimum technical requirements must be met to enable a successful learning experience.

- **Laptops/ Computers:**

Students will be asked to furnish their own laptop or desktop computer to be used for accessing the Blackboard system and coursework.

- **Blackboard Course Access and Navigation:**

This course was developed using a web course tool called Blackboard. Students will use their AU account to login at: <https://blackboard.american.edu/>

I recommend that you Bookmark this site so that you can easily find it. You *may* also want to obtain a webcam, microphone, and headphones to allow for synchronous face-to-face video and voice interaction on Skype and other software. These are optional – not required. More information can be found on Blackboard’s Tutorial page.

**Blackboard Support:**

Students should immediately report any problems to their course instructor and also contact the Blackboard Support Center at [blackboard@american.edu](mailto:blackboard@american.edu) or call (202)885-3904 for 24/7 support. Students can also log onto <http://help.blackboard.com/student/index.htm> for support.

**AU Help Desk (focuses on all other IT issues):**

Answers to your technology questions are just an e-mail, instant message, or phone call away. Contact the IT Help Desk at 202-885-2550, [helpdesk@american.edu](mailto:helpdesk@american.edu), or AskAmericanUHelp to reach one of our professional staff who can answer your questions and provide general troubleshooting assistance. Students can also log onto <http://www.american.edu/oit/Need-Help-Now.cfm> for support.

**Policy on Server Unavailability or Other Technical Difficulties :**

The university is committed to providing a reliable online course system to all users. However, in the event of any unexpected server outage or any unusual technical difficulty which prevents students from completing a time sensitive assessment activity, the professor may extend the time windows and provide an appropriate accommodation based on the situation.

**UNIVERSITY INFORMATION**

**Academic Support and Access Center:**

In addition to using the resources available in this course’s department, all students may take advantage of individual academic counseling, skills workshops, tutor referrals, Supplemental Instruction, and writing appointments in the Academic Support and Access Center.  
(202) 885-6225 // MGC 243

Students with Disabilities: If you wish to receive accommodations for a disability, please notify me with a letter from the Academic Support and Access Center. As accommodations are not retroactive, timely notification at the beginning of the semester, if possible, is requested.

**Counseling Center:**

The Counseling Center offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus mental health resources.  
(202) 885-3500  
MGC 214

**Writing Center:**

The Writing Center offers free, individual coaching sessions to all AU students. In your 45-minute session, a student writing consultant can help you address assignments, understand the

conventions of academic writing, and learn how to revise and edit your own work. The Center offers appointments on the hour from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, and 3 to 6 p.m. on Sundays. Call or go to the Writing Lab scheduling website to arrange a session.

(202) 885-2991

First Floor of Bender Library

### **Center for Diversity & Inclusion:**

The Center for Diversity & Inclusion is dedicated to enhancing LGBTQ, Multicultural, First Generation, and Women's experiences on campus and to advance AU's commitment to respecting & valuing diversity by serving as a resource and liaison to students, staff, and faculty on issues of equity through education, outreach, and advocacy. In addition to visiting in person or calling, the center can be reached via email at [cdi@american.edu](mailto:cdi@american.edu).

(202) 885-3651

MGC 201 & 202

### **Dean of Students Office:**

The Dean of Students Office offers one-on-one meetings to discuss academic, adjustment, and personal issues that may be interfering with a student's ability to succeed academically. The DOS office also verifies documentation for students who have medical or mental health issues that cause them to be absent from class.

(202) 885-3300

Butler Pavilion 208

### **Emergency Preparedness for Disruption of Classes:**

In the event of an emergency, American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Blackboard, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of an emergency, students should refer to the AU Student Portal, the AU Web site for Emergency Preparedness and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/ college-specific information.

### **Academic Integrity Code:**

Standards of academic conduct are governed by the University's Academic Integrity Code. By enrolling in the university and registering for this course, you acknowledge your familiarity with the Code and pledge to abide by it. All suspected violations of the Code will be immediately

referred to the Office of the Dean. Disciplinary action, including failure for the course, suspension, or dismissal, may result.

Additional information about the Code (i.e. acceptable forms of collaboration, definitions of plagiarism, use of sources including the Internet, and the adjudication process) can be found in a number of places including the University's Academic Regulations, Student Handbook, and Academic Integrity Code website. If you have any questions about academic integrity or standards of conduct in this course, please discuss them with your instructor.

Undergraduate Research Support: <http://www.american.edu/provost/undergrad/research.cfm>

**An additional note on plagiarism:**

Submitted work must be your own. Do not 'borrow' ideas or wording from friends, other authors, or the internet. If you use another person's work, you MUST cite it properly. In addition to plagiarizing others, it is possible to plagiarize oneself when using your own previously written material without proper citation. To avoid self-plagiarism and related academic dishonesty, cite all material that you have written for any purposes other than for this class.

*Acknowledgements: This syllabus is inspired by others produced by colleagues at American University. Thanks to Dr. David Vine, Dr. Melissa Hackman, Dr. Anne C. Claus and Laura Jung for their input and support.*