

ANTHROP 2F03
“Listening Across Difference”
Introduction to Cultural
Anthropology
Fall 2020
Location: online

Instructor:

Professor Yana Stainova

Email: stainovy@mcmaster.ca

Office hours: Tuesdays 1-2 p.m.

via Zoom

Weekly tutorials are synchronous and attendance is expected. More information about the tutorials and TAs can be found on Avenue to Learn.

Course description

Anthropology is a comparative study of cultures, societies, and the infinitely diverse ways of being in the world. The field seeks to provide knowledge about how people’s lives and behaviors are shaped by social relations, politico-economic systems, and historical forces. Based on ethnographic accounts, the course will introduce you to the primary domains of social and cultural anthropology: race and racism; gender, sexuality, and kinship; inequality, power, and violence; sickness and healing; social suffering and addiction. In this course, you will learn about anthropology’s core concepts, theories, and methods, as well as some debates in the discipline.

Required readings

- Garcia, Angela. *The Pastoral Clinic*.
- Hamdy, Sherine and Coleman Nye. *Lissa*.
- Additional materials are available through A2L.

Course objectives

- By the end of the course you should be able to:
- Define key terms and concepts in anthropology in your own words.
- Develop an understanding of how anthropologists use ethnography to comprehend, analyze, and translate cultural similarity and difference.
- Reflect on your own cultural biases and enhance your understanding of, and appreciation for, human difference.
- Apply the tools of anthropology to the analysis of current social problems and imagining alternative futures.
- Use the methods and sensibilities of anthropology for thinking about your own life, engaging in cross-cultural interactions with your peers, and building your own community.

Course evaluation

- Museum exhibit review – 15 %
- Participation – 25%
- Proposal for artwork – 5%
- Your artwork + reflection – 20%
- Final exam (take home) – 35%

Major due dates

- Museum exhibit review: October 9th, 2020
- Participation: weekly during and after tutorial
- Proposal for artwork: October 30th, 2020
- Your artwork + reflection: November 13th, 2020
- Final exam: November 30th, 2020

Class Format

In the time of COVID, we rely hugely on online platforms for personal, educational, and professional communication. I am mindful of the demands this makes on our schedules, especially when we might live in different time zones and have more obligations to our community than usual. I have decided to record the lectures in advance and post them on Avenue to Learn for you to watch at your convenience. The lectures will be in conversation with the readings for that day, which is why it is important to listen to the lectures after you have completed the readings. *I would welcome the opportunity to meet you one-on-one during my weekly virtual office hours. Please sign up in advance on A2L.*

At the same time, teaching and learning take place best in community and in live dialogue with our peers and teachers. This is why the virtual tutorials will be synchronous and attendance is mandatory. In tutorials, you will have the opportunity to engage in greater detail with the readings and to share your opinions about them. You are expected to listen to the lectures and do the readings before attending the tutorial. I hope that in these weekly meetings, you will find a satisfying rhythm and structure, and a platform for social and intellectual engagement. The weekly tutorial meetings will be held via zoom and the links to each tutorial can be found on Avenue to Learn.

Required Materials and Texts

- Garcia, Angela. *The Pastoral Clinic*.
- Hamdy, Sherine and Coleman Nye. *Lissa*.

Both books can be ordered online as paper copies. The McMaster University library provides unlimited digital access to *The Pastoral Clinic*. You can find the e-book by following this link: http://discovery.mcmaster.ca/iii/encore/record/C__Rb4242993?lang=eng.

Lissa is also available as an e-book for purchase:

https://play.google.com/store/books/details/Sherine_Hamdy_Lissa?id=58htDwAAQBAJ

Please note that the library provides access to the book *to only one person at a time*, which is why it is important not to rely on the library copy to do the reading the week before the reading is assigned.

All articles or other media are available through the library and/or accessible through Avenue to Learn.

Important: Some of the texts we'll be reading are about sensitive topics, such as drug addiction, sexual orientation, life-threatening illness, death of family members, and suicide. While I believe that one of the most important contributions of anthropology is to help us face and analyze uncomfortable topics, I am also aware that some of you may find these topics too disturbing. Please be advised that doing the readings is required to complete all of the assignments and I will **not** be able to provide alternative readings.

Course Evaluation

The success of the course depends on your commitment to completing all the required readings for each tutorial, to critically reflect on the readings, to participate actively in group discussions, and to creatively integrate these insights in the written assignments.

Museum exhibit review – 15 %

Your “midterm” assignment is to make a virtual “visit” to a museum exhibit of your choice and to write up a brief (500-word) essay that analyzes this exhibit according to the following prompts:

- Who curated the exhibit? What is their personal and social background? Why is this important in analyzing the exhibit?
- What about this exhibit moved you? How would you describe this feeling?
- What is the “story” or “argument” of this exhibit? What are the curator’s stated and implied aims?
- How well is this story told? Use specific examples from works of art, label text, and/or commentary on the structure and order of the exhibit to justify your response.
- How does this exhibit relate to one of the anthropological concepts we have discussed so far in class (both readings and lecture)? Reference at least **1 class source** in your answer.

Your artwork + reflection (750 words) – proposal (5%) and final artwork (20%): total 25%

This assignment consists of two components:

- **Proposal** (due October 30th): in 150 words, respond to question 1 of the Artwork questions listed below: “What is your artwork and how did you choose it? What does it represent and why is it meaningful to you?” Describe your artwork in *your own words*. You may use this assignment as a draft for text you include in your reflection and final piece.
- **Final artwork + reflection** (due November 13th):

I find that making art – and then reflecting upon it – is a valuable pedagogical tool and an expression of artistic creativity at all times. However, especially during a pandemic, when such a large part of our lives are virtual and mediated by technology, taking the time to create a material art object (such as building a piece of furniture, making pottery, etc.), dance, play an instrument, or write a poem is crucial for our emotional and intellectual well-being. This is why I ask you to create an artwork that is inspired by one of the themes we have covered in class. The aim of the exercise is to immerse you in an activity you already love doing – my definition of “art” is very broad here. If you have trouble coming up with one or you are unsure whether your idea is suitable for the assignment, please speak to me or your TAs.

I ask that the artwork you create have an **auto-ethnographic component** (i.e. that it have some personal relevance for you and in how you perceive yourself in community) examined through the lens of one **social theory framework** to which you have been exposed through course material and at least **one core ethnographic example** from the class. The social theory may, but need not, emerge from the same source as the ethnographic example. It could also be from another text or from lecture. The essay itself should illuminate the anthropological significance and cultural relevance of your artwork. As you think about how to create and analyze your artwork, address the following question:

1. What is your artwork and how did you choose it? What does it represent and why is it meaningful to you? Describe your artwork in *your own words*. (a draft of the answer to this question is contained in your proposal).
2. What connections does it have to your personal life/background and what meaning does this artistic practice have within your community (the one you were born in or the one you chose later in life)?
3. What type of cultural knowledge did you need to create this artwork? How does this knowledge manifest in the work itself?
4. What issue/problem/experience (social, cultural, political) does this work address?
5. What social theory have you chosen to help you (and your reader) think about this artwork? Why is this theory a good choice in terms of helping diverse audiences experience and appreciate your art?
6. How does this artwork relate to the course text(s) you've chosen to reference? How does this ethnographic example help you to contextualize, compare, or further understand the art piece?

Your “argument” in this essay should be to tell the reader why this artwork matters to you and people in your broader social context. What can it teach us? How might anthropological knowledge and sensibilities prove useful in helping us understand its significance? Your essay should be written with an eye toward a general audience who is not familiar with the material we have covered in class. Imagine it as the artist’s statement that accompanies a piece of art in a museum and is aimed at giving the viewer biographical information about the artist, their motivations for making the piece, and their hopes for what message it will send into the world. Assessment of this essay will be based on how well you address the above questions, the quality of writing, and the presence of a clear and specific argument.

Please note that I will not be grading the artistic excellence of your piece (something I am not qualified to do) but rather how you reflect upon it in your writing. If you are concerned about producing and artwork or are unsure if your idea is relevant to the assignment, please speak to me or your TAs.

Participation – 25%

This class involves significant participation. I recognize that there are different ways of participating: speaking up in class during lectures, participating thoughtfully in small group work, putting care in your assignments, showing up to office hours. I also understand that the virtual format presents its own set of technological and social challenges. I do not expect all of you to show participation in the same way. At the same time, I believe that it is important to voice your ideas and reactions to the class themes and readings through participating in conversation with your peers, your TAs, and me. In tutorials, you will discuss the ethnographic texts we are reading, and link them to the material presented in class meetings. Your participation grade is based on your performance in the tutorials and in the short reflections afterwards. TAs will take note of who speaks, how often, and the quality of participation. Depending on internet capacities, you may need to use chat functions to “talk” with each other at some moments during your tutorials.

After **five of the tutorials of your choice**, you are expected to post a short summary (100 words) of your discussion on A2L + answer one of the “guiding questions” for this week. These posts are due by Friday at midnight and will be graded on a complete/incomplete basis.

I will assess these posts based on the following criteria:

- Clear and specific answer to one guiding question.
- Use of evidence from class/materials to support the answer.
- Strict adherence to the word count
- Quality of writing.

Final exam (take home) – 35%

In the second to last week of class, you will be given 24 hours to complete a take-home exam. The exam will require you to provide short definitions of concepts that I have covered in the lecture, in the conversations with our guests or you have encountered in the readings. It will also ask you to provide slightly longer answers to a question prompt. The exam requires you to provide definitions and reflections of important concepts and debates in the discipline *in your own words*. Please note that your responses will be automatically scanned for plagiarism.

Course Policies

Respect: Academic Discourse, Class Climate, and Inclusivity

A core social value in anthropology is **respect**. Acting with respect means attempting to imagine the world through the eyes of another person, honoring their worth and their contributions to the community. In this classroom, you are likely to encounter ideas that you find surprising or even unsettling. You should feel free to voice your opinions; at the same time you should feel free to — respectfully — challenge ideas with which you disagree. When engaging in discussion, I encourage you to listen — to be attentive to the experiences and views of others (our authors and your peers) before formulating your own arguments, reactions, and critiques. One of the most important things I hope you will learn in this class is that a diversity of backgrounds and opinions is not a threat but an opportunity for thinking about and addressing social issues that concern us all.

Email and communication

In these trying times, it is more important than ever to communicate clearly. As soon as an issue arises for you, please be in touch with me and your TAs so we can work together to address it. My preferred method of communication with students is **virtually using Zoom** during office hours. You may also email me. I try to reply to emails or follow up in class within 24 hours, except for weekends when I will be offline. If you have a seriously urgent issue, please note this in your email subject line and also be in touch with your class dean.

Submission of Assignments

All written work (essays) will be submitted in electronic copy through the Dropbox function on the course’s ATL website. All written work (essays and blog posts) are subject to evaluation for originality. This course uses an evaluation service provided by Turnitin.com, which students may opt out of; in this case, Grammarly.com will be used. If you would like to opt out of evaluation by Turnitin.com, please let the instructor know before October 1.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Turning in assignments late creates a cascading problem for you, your TAs and mes. If you need accommodations, you must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work." Unless there is a critical problem and/or this issue has not been communicated with me in advance, I will deduct 5% of the grade for each day an assignment is late up until a grade of 50. After this point, I will only accept a late assignment for 50% of its value.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

You are also expected to arrive to your tutorials **on time** and remain in them for the entire period (bathroom breaks excluded!). This is another manifestation of respect for your TAs and for your fellow students.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please to go www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

University Policies

Online Elements

This course includes on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used.

Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course.

Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Authenticity/Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other

software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".
https://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=1698#Requests_for_Relief_for_Missed_Academic_Term_Work

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office *normally within 10 working days* of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Privacy Protection

In accordance with regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, the University will not allow return of graded materials by placing them in boxes in departmental offices or classrooms so that students may retrieve their papers themselves; tests and assignments must be returned directly to the student. Similarly, grades for assignments for courses may only be posted using the last 5 digits of the student number as the identifying data. The following possibilities exist for return of graded materials:

1. Direct return of materials to students in class;
2. Return of materials to students during office hours;
3. Students attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with assignments for return by mail;
4. Submit/grade/return papers electronically.

Arrangements for the return of assignments from the options above will be finalized during the first class.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1, September 14: *Introduction to the Course*

Readings: The syllabus
Coates, Ta Nehisi. "Acting French."
<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/08/acting-french/375743/>

Guiding questions: What is the focus of anthropological research? How do anthropologists approach their object of study? What methodology do they use and how is it different from other disciplines?

Week 2, September 21: *Culture and Cultural Relativism*

Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and its Others." *American anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 783-790.

Rosaldo, Renato. "Grief and a Headhunter's Rage: On the Cultural Force of Emotions." (1984).

Guiding questions: How does anthropology define the concept of *culture*? What do anthropologists mean by the notion of cultural relativism? In what historical context did it emerge and what other theories did it replace? In what ways does the concept continue to be valuable in today's world and how does it help us think about cultural diversity? What are the limits of cultural relativism?

Week 3, September 28: *Race, An Anthropological History*

Menand, Louis. "How Cultural Anthropology Redefined Humanity,"

https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/08/26/how-cultural-anthropologists-redefined-humanity?source=search_google_dsa_paid&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI1OP_1Km86QIVHAIiCR359Q7rEAAAYASAAEgI8mPD_BwE

Kushner, Rachel, "Is Prison Necessary? Ruth Wilson Gilmore Might Change Your Mind," *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/17/magazine/prison-abolition-ruth-wilson-gilmore.html>

Listen to this podcast about anthropologist and writer Zora Neale Hurston:

<https://www.npr.org/2019/08/20/752630522/how-a-few-renegade-thinkers-helped-usher-in-a-new-era-of-anthropology>

Guiding questions: Is race a biological fact or a social construct? How did Boas, the "founding father" of American anthropology, challenge commonplace assumptions about race that were pervasive in his time? What is structural racism and what are its manifestations in contemporary society? What are some of the ways in which we can imagine a society without institutions, such as prison, that prominently reproduce structural racism?

Week 4, October 5: *Gender, Sexuality, and the Essentialist/Constructivist Debate*

Kulick, Don. "The gender of Brazilian transgendered prostitutes." *American Anthropologist* 99, no. 3 (1997): 574-585.

Martin, Emily. 1991. The Egg and the Sperm: How science has constructed a romance based on stereotypes. *Signs* 16(3):485-501.

Guiding questions: While biology defines much of what human beings share and what being human means, culture certainly does too. How is gender a product of culture? In what ways do sex and gender differ? How do we enact social roles that are 'naturalized' as biological?

Week 5, October 12: (Fall recess no class)

Week 6, October 19: *Magic and Enchantment*

Guest lecture: Chelsey Kivland (Dartmouth College)

Evans-Pritchard, Edward E. *Witchcraft, oracles and magic among the Azande* [selections]

West, Harry, *Ethnographic Sorcery* [selections]

Stainova, Yana. *Enchantment as Methodology*. <https://savageminds.org/2017/11/01/enchantment-as-methodology/>

Guiding questions: What does the study of magic reveal about human societies? Is magic rational or irrational? How have anthropological approaches to magic changed over the years? How can we incorporate magic and enchantment into the method and writing of our scholarship?

Week 7, October 26: *Gifts and Commodities*

Mauss, Marcel. 1925. *The Gift* (selections) from *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History* (McGee & Warms).

Strathern, Marilyn. 2012. Gifts Money Cannot Buy. *Social Anthropology* 20(4):397–410.

Guiding Questions: What are the differences between a ‘gift’ and a commodity? What is behind the saying that there are ‘no free gifts’—or, in other words, why is reciprocity obligatory? How are practices of gift giving and exchange tied to larger systems of social and economic exchange?

Week 8, November 2: *Anthropology as Art*

Reading: Hamdy and Nye, *Lissa*. Entire book.

Guiding questions: How does this non-traditional format for writing/drawing scholarship allow the authors to illustrate complex social topics?

Week 9, November 9: *Ethics and the Limits of Ethnography*

Readings: Garcia, Angela. *The Pastoral Clinic*. Introduction and Chapter 1: Pg. 1-68

Guiding questions: How is a history of land dispossession related to the contemporary phenomenon of heroin addiction in New Mexico? What is the “model of chronicity” and how does Garcia critique it? Why is relapse so common and how does the author explain it? How do institutions affect and structure the experience of addiction? What are the ethnographic challenges of studying a phenomenon, such as addiction, that are foreclosed to verbal articulation?

Week 10, November 16: *Memory, Violence and Place*

Readings: Garcia, Angela. *The Pastoral Clinic*. Chapter 2: Pg. 69-111

Guiding questions: How does the history of colonial violence of a certain place inform our understanding of contemporary phenomena such as addiction?

Week 11, November 23: *Kinship*

Readings: Garcia, Angela. *The Pastoral Clinic*. Chapter 3: Pg. 111-150

Guiding questions: Marriage and the creation of extended networks of kin (people you are related to by birth and by marriage) are near human universals. Yet the meanings we ascribe to marriage and kinship vary. What does it mean to say you are related to someone? What are the different types of cultural values ascribed to creating, honoring, and sustaining kinship networks? How do kinship networks relate to other aspects of social, political, and economic life? How does this chapter challenge conventional understandings of kinship? How are relationships between kin mediated by drug use?

Week 12, November 30: No readings. You have 24 hours to complete the take-home exam.

Week 13, December 7: *Neoliberalism*

Readings: Garcia, Angela. *The Pastoral Clinic*. Chapter 5 and conclusion: Pg.183-211.

Guiding questions: What is neoliberalism and how is it different from capitalism? How do we see neoliberal values reproduced by the Nuevo Día addiction clinic? How did neoliberalism affect the fate of the addiction clinic? How are neoliberal values reflected in the language used by officials within Nuevo Día? In your experience, what other institutions can be described as neoliberal and why?