

ANTH 5015
Anthropology: A Postgraduate Introduction
Fall 2025

Room: Room 405, Yasutomo International Academy Park
Time: Wednesdays 6:30-9:15 PM
Instructor: Aaron HAMES, ajhames@cuhk.edu.hk, NAH 325, 3943-5550
Office Hours: Friday 10:00-11:30 AM or by appointment.

This course provides a general introduction to anthropology. As a four-field discipline, anthropology is dedicated to understanding what it means to be a human being. Researchers take a variety of approaches, drawing on training in biology, archaeology, linguistics, and ethnographic methods. While the term begins with a focus on human biology and evolution, we will primarily explore major subfields within sociocultural anthropology. Drawing on examples from across the globe, we will consider topics such as kinship, ethnicity, gender, health, healing, language, and economics. Students will learn to think and see the world in a distinctly anthropological way.

Required Texts

All readings are either posted on Blackboard or available as an eBook through the University Library.

Resources

The following may be helpful in getting oriented:

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology. This is a searchable on-line encyclopedia and can be found here: <https://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/>

Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a general understanding of the various subfields in sociocultural anthropology.
2. Explain grasp of how the discipline of anthropology has changed over time.
3. Recognize and use different approaches to understand cultural diversity and human universals.
4. Write critically and holistically about the human condition.

GRADE DESCRIPTORS

| Grade | Criteria for 1) the course and 2) for coursework |
|-------|--|
|-------|--|

| | |
|---------|---|
| A | <p>1) Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.</p> <p>2) The work has creatively synthesized course materials and key ideas in an original way. Observations are nuanced, the argument is logical and cohesive, the discussion is well-organized, and the writing is clear. Concrete evidence corresponds to statements and claims. The work responds directly to the assignment prompt.</p> |
| A- | <p>1) Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.</p> <p>2) The work synthesizes course materials and key ideas in an original way, but there are areas for improvement.</p> |
| B-range | <p>1) Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.</p> <p>2) The work demonstrates a solid grasp of course materials and key ideas. There are areas for improvement with respect to handling complexity, building a cohesive argument, organizing the discussion, communicating clearly, and/or identifying relevant evidence. Response to the assignment prompt may not be sufficient.</p> |
| C-range | <p>1) Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.</p> <p>2) The work shows some effort, but course materials have not been sufficiently engaged. The argument and the writing is not clear, and/or there is no evidence for statements and claims made. Understanding of course materials and key ideas has not been demonstrated.</p> |
| D-range | <p>1) Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.</p> <p>2) The work shows little effort to engage course materials. There are major problems with clarity of argument and writing.</p> |
| F | <p>1) Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.</p> <p>2) The work has failed to respond to the assignment prompt.</p> |

Evaluation

| <i>Grade Item</i> | <i>Percentage</i> | <i>Due Date</i> |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Paper No. 1 | 25% | October 10 |
| Paper No. 2 | 25% | November 15 |
| Final Paper | 35% | December 12 |
| Participation | 15% | -- |

All assignments must be submitted to VeriGuide. Assignments without a signed declaration from VeriGuide will not be graded. Please visit:

https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.aspx

TIP FOR SURVIVAL: The diversity of topics and perspectives surveyed in this class can feel overwhelming. I encourage you to form small study groups. Please visit office hours whenever you like and you're welcome to talk to me if you are having difficulty.

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Week 1 (September 3): INTRODUCTION

📖 De León, Jason. 2015. Introduction. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Univ of California Press.

Week 2 (September 10): ETHNOGRAPHY

📖 De León, Jason. 2015. Chapter 1 in *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Univ of California Press.

📖 Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1993. Chapter 1 in *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*.

Week 3 (September 17): BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

📖 Wrangham, Richard. 2009. Introduction and Chapters 1 from *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human*.

📖 De León, Jason. 2015. Chapter 2 in *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Univ of California Press.

📖 **OPTIONAL:** Templeton, Alan R. 2013. "Biological Races in Humans." *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 44 (3): 262–71.

Week 4 (September 24): ARCHAEOLOGY

- 📖 De León, Jason. 2015. Chapters 3-4. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Univ of California Press.

Week 5 (October 8): HUMANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- 📖 Netting, Robert McC. 1993. Prologue and sections in “The Technology and Knowledge of Intensive Farm Practices” (Chapter 1) in *Smallholders, Householders: Farm Families and the Ecology of Intensive, Sustainable Agriculture*.
- 📖 De León, Jason. 2015. Chapter 5 in *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Univ of California Press.
- 📖 **OPTIONAL:** Moran, Emilio. 2022. “Urban Ecology and Urban Sustainability” in *Human Adaptability: An Introduction to Ecological Anthropology*.

PAPER NO. 1 DUE: October 10 (Friday)

- 📖 Guiding questions will be posted October 3. Paper is due on October 10 by 11:59 p.m. Please follow instructions for submission in the prompt.

Week 6 (October 15): LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

- 📖 McWhorter, John C. 2014. Introduction and “Dissing the Chinese” (Chapter 4) in *The Language Hoax*.
- 📖 De León, Jason. 2015. Chapter 6 in *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Univ of California Press.

Week 7 (October 22): KINSHIP

- 📖 Carsten, Janet. 2000. “‘Knowing Where You’ve Come From’: Ruptures and Continuities of Time and Kinship in Narratives of Adoption Reunions.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 6 (4): 687–703.
- 📖 Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1993. Chapter 4 from *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*.
- 📖 De León, Jason. 2015. Chapter 7 in *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Univ of California Press.

Week 8 (November 5): ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY

- 📖 Mauss, Marcel. 1966. Translator’s note, “Introductory” (Gifts and Return Gifts), “Gifts and the Obligation to Return Gifts” (Chapter 1).

- 📖 Chin, Elizabeth. 2001. "Anthropologist Takes Inner-City Children on Shopping Sprees," in *Purchasing Power: Black Kids and American Consumer Culture*
- 📖 De León, Jason. 2015. Chapter 8 in *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Univ of California Press.

Week 9 (November 12): MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

- 📖 Kleinman, Arthur, and Peter Benson. 2006. "Anthropology in the Clinic: The Problem of Cultural Competency and How to Fix It." *PLoS Med* 3 (10): e294.
- 📖 De León, Jason. 2015. Chapter 9. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Univ of California Press.
- 📖 Farmer, Paul. 2004. "An Anthropology of Structural Violence." *Current Anthropology* 45 (3): 305–25.

PAPER NO. 2 DUE: November 14 (Friday)

- 📖 Guiding questions will be posted November 7. Paper is due on November 14 by 11:59 p.m. Please follow instructions for submission in the prompt.

Week 10 (November 19): POLITICS

- 📖 Sahlins, "Poor Man, Rich Man, Big Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia." *Comparatives Studies in Society and History*.
- 📖 Burchell, Graham, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds. 1991. Please read pp. 1-13 only. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault*. Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- 📖 De León, Jason. 2015. Chapter 10 in *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Univ of California Press.

Week 11 (November 26): GENDER

- 📖 Mahmood, Saba. 2001. "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival." *Cultural Anthropology* 16 (2): 202–36.
- 📖 De León, Jason. 2015. Chapter 11 in *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Univ of California Press.

- 📖 **OPTIONAL:** Ortner, Sherry B. 1996. Chapter 2 (“Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?”) and Chapter 7 (“So, *Is* Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?”) in *Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture*. Beacon Press.

Week 12 (Makeup class TBA): RELIGION AND RITUAL

- 📖 Lienhardt, Godfrey. 2008. “The Control of Experience,” (Chapter 24), in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*.
- 📖 Boddy, Janice. 2008. “Spirits and Selves in Northern Sudan,” (Chapter 30), in *A Reader in the Anthropology of Religion*.
- 📖 De León, Jason. 2015. Chapter 12: Epilogue in *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Univ of California Press.

FINAL PAPER DUE: December 12 (Friday)

- 📖 Guiding questions will be posted December 2. The paper is due on December 12 by 11:59 p.m.

TIPS & POLICIES

Opinions vs. Arguments

There is a difference between opinion and argument. Your personal viewpoints are welcome during class discussion, but your papers will be evaluated based upon your ability to formulate an argument rather than your ability to express an opinion. An argument is analytical. Arguments propose relationships between variables, and they support assertions with empirical evidence.

There is also a difference between opinion and perspective. An opinion usually contains some kind of judgment about how the world should or should not operate. A perspective, on the other hand, is a way of looking at the world. In other words, having perspective involves the ability to see patterns and themes, or differences and divergences, which may not be obvious at first glance. Having an opinion is easy. Having the insight that comes with perspective is much harder.

Meta-level observation

A common difficulty new students have with this course relates to learning how to do metalevel observations, i.e. observing the observers, noting how a topic or phenomenon could be approached in different ways, and noting how trends change over time. This may sound intimidating, but this skill is crucial to critical thinking.

Late Submissions

Papers submitted after the due date will suffer a fraction of a grade deduction for every day it is late. For example, an A- will become a B+, a B will become a B-, et cetera.

Academic Honesty

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on academic honesty and adopts a policy of *zero tolerance* on academic dishonesty. Any such offence will lead to disciplinary action including possibly termination of studies at the University. Students should know how to properly use source material and how to avoid plagiarism. Detailed guidelines and examples for the acknowledgement of sources can be found on the University's website at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. All papers must be submitted through VeriGuide.

Use of AI Tools

Use of AI tools for course papers is strictly prohibited. You are expected to work independently, and to cite sources for any and all information you did not collect yourself.