

ANTH1020 Anthropology: the Study of Global Humanity

Lecture: Monday 12.30-3.15pm

Venue: Wu Ho Man Yuen Building 507

Instructor: Sealing Cheng (sealing@cuhk.edu.hk)

**Teaching Assistants: Mark LI (marklifotofoto@gmail.com);
Haokun Fu (1155245547@link.cuhk.edu.hk)**

This course introduces students to the basics of anthropology and its role within the humanities, and its relevance to modern-day society. It addresses the basic question of “why people do what they do”: how our cultural and social shaping in large part makes us what we are as human beings. The course focuses on the similarities and differences in human societies and cultures, in order to promote a fuller and deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of being human in today’s world. In the Spring of 2025-6, we will follow the wisdom of Gao Tzu, the ancient Chinese sage, that “Food and Sex are Human Nature” and explore the diversity of cultures through food and sex. This is a 3-class-session will include a variety of lecture, class activities, and research exercises to give students a sense of what anthropological research is about.

本科旨在向學生介紹人類學的基本概念和基礎知識，討論人類學和現代生活息息相關之處，以及它和人文學科的關係。它處理的根本問題是，“人們為甚麼做他們所做的事情，”即文化和社會如何塑造我們。本課程主要考量多樣的人類社會和文化的異同點，使學生更加完整和深入地了解在當今世界作為人的本質及意義。這學期我們會追隨告子的至理名言：“食色，性也。”《孟子·告子》看人類學如何讓我們理解人性與文化的千絲萬縷。

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will acquire a holistic understanding of different regions, cultures and societies across the globe;
2. Students will develop their own judgment and sense of values through the comparisons of different regions, cultures, and societies;
3. Students will acquire skills and confidence in conducting ethnographic research and writing;
4. Students will come to understand how anthropology is linked to the humanities in its emphasis on the culturally-sensitive understanding of common human concerns.

Assessment:

(All assignments are due by 11:59 PM on the stated due date.)

1. Class Attendance and Participation (30%)

This class uses mixed-mode pedagogy in each 2 hour 45 min session. Your responsibility is regular attendance and participation. The awarding of high participation points comes with good attendance and active, thoughtful, consistent class participation, the kind that reveals your thorough preparation and engagement with class materials. This means contributing your own ideas as well as providing constructive responses to class discussions.

2. Response Paper on "The Wedding Banquet" (10%) (500 words, Due on Feb 2)

3. **1 set of Fieldnotes (20%) (800 words, Due one week after the activity)**

CHOOSE ONE:

- a. Boodle Fight (Mar 16, due on Mar 23)
- b. Fieldtrip (Mar 23, due on Mar 30)

4. **Canteen Ethnography/One-minute Film Project and Presentation on Apr 13 (Individual or Group of maximum 4) (40%)**

Using concept(s) in the course, you will develop your focus and work on this ethnography/film project together with the instructors.

Submission in 4 Parts

Part 1. Hanging Out Notes (5%) (Due on Jan 23)

Part 2. Fieldnotes on Canteen Ethnography (10%) (Due on Feb 13) (600-800 words)

Part 3. DRAFT Ethnography (1200 words) /Film Synopsis (400 words) (Bring to class discussion on March 30)
: *What questions are you asking? What do you want people to understand about the canteen through your work? What have you observed about **rituals, gender, commensality, or symbols** in the canteen?*

Part 4. Ethnography/Film Final Submission and Presentation in class on Apr 13 (25%)
(Submit all films on Apr 10, instructions to follow)

No late submission will be accepted without adequate documentation (e.g. doctor's certificate or counseling certificate).

Jan 5 Class 1 Anthropology – What does it mean to be human?

If you were a Martian on earth....what questions would you ask about life on earth? Or in this classroom?

Discovery-oriented model of research, suspending judgment about your conclusions until research has been conducted.

Part I: Rituals, Commensality, and Gender + Ethnography Practicum

Jan 12 Class 2 Rituals and Gender

1. *What is the difference between an action and a ritual?*
2. *What kind of meanings do we invest into food?*
3. *Does Gender matter when it comes to eating/drinking/preparing food...?*

Last 40 minutes - Group Exercises : Male food, Female Food; Male drink, Female Drink; Gendered division of labor surrounding FOOD.

4. *Do men and women drink alcohol in different ways? What are the rituals of drinking that produce gender differences?*

Abad, Luis Cantarero. 2001. "Gender and Drink in Aragon, Spain." In *Drinking: Anthropological Approaches*, 144-156. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Optional Readings:

Meigs, Anna S. 1992. "Food Rules and the Traditional Sexual Ideology." In Deane W. Curtin and Lisa M. Heldke (eds). *Cooking, Eating, Thinking: Transformative Philosophies of Food*, pp.109-118. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Huhn, Ariana. 2022. "Body, Sex, and Diet in Mozambique". In (eds). Lenore Manderson, Elizabeth Cartwright, Anita Hardon (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Medical Anthropology*, pp. 54-58. London: Routledge.

Jan 19. Class 3 Commensality & Ethnography Practicum 1: Hanging Out

1. *What role does food play in a social group?*
2. *Why do we eat together? How do we eat to show that we are eating together?*
3. *What does the Common Pot tell us about hierarchy and status in a group?*

Watson, James. 1987. "From the Common Pot: Feasting with Equals in Chinese Society." *Anthropos* 82(4/6): 389-401.

Jan 26 Class 4 Film Screening : *The Wedding Banquet* (1993) Dir. Lee Ang (Response Paper: 10%)

1. *In what ways is the family a hierarchical structure? How do you see it in the film? What are the reasons for such hierarchal relations?*
2. *In what ways are the *Wedding Banquet* different from the *Common Pot*?*
3. *How are gender and sexuality an important part of family and kinship relations? And how do they create conflicts between generations?*

Watson, Rubie. 1986. "The Named and the Nameless: Gender and Person in Chinese Society." *American Ethnologist* 13(4):619-631.

Feb 2. Class 5 Ethnography Practicum 2: Canteen Ethnography

Special Lecture by Sam Lai

References:

Navicoff, Marc. (n.d.) "Ethnography of the Main Dining Hall."

<https://journeys.dartmouth.edu/marcanovicoff22/ethnography-of-main-dining-hall/>

Gillard, Isabella. 2021. "Diverse Dining: Who is Campus Food Catering For?"

<https://ethnographylab.ca/2022/02/12/diverse-dining-who-is-campus-food-catering-for-by-isabella-gillard-ethnography-of-the-university-2021-focus-on-diversity/>

Mak, Veronica. 2011. "[Southeast Asian Chinese food in tea café and noodle shops in Hong Kong.](#)" In Tan Chee-Beng (ed.) *Chinese Food and Foodways in Southeast Asia and Beyond*, pp. 218-234.

Chan, Selina Ching. 2019. "Tea cafés and the Hong Kong identity: Food culture and hybridity". *China Information* 33(3).

Feb 9. Class 6 Presentations on Canteen Ethnography and *Project Consultations 1*

- i. Presentation and Identifying themes for Projects
- ii. Mark Li: Special Lecture on Film-making

Feb 16 CHINESE NEW YEAR VACATION

Part II World Ethnographies + Fieldwork + Presentations

Feb 23. Class 7 Symbols: The Wedding Cake in Scotland

1. *What are symbols?*
2. *How do we learn about the meanings of symbols?*
3. *Can the symbolic meanings of a practice/object change?*
4. *Does everyone have to agree on the meaning of a symbolic practice/object?*

Charsley, Simon. 1987. "Interpretation and Custom: The Case of the Wedding Cake." *Man*, 22(1), 93–110.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/2802965>

Hendry, J. (1999). *Society: A Set of Symbols*. In: *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*. Palgrave, London.

https://doi.org.easyaccess1.lib.cuhk.edu.hk/10.1007/978-1-349-27281-5_6

"Symbolism," Sapiens, <https://www.sapiens.org/teaching-unit/symbolism/>

Optional Readings:

Reed-Danahay, D. (1996). Champagne and chocolate: "taste" and inversion in a French wedding ritual. *American Anthropologist*, 98(4), 750-761. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1996.98.4.02a00060>

Holloway, S. (2020). Love, Custom & Consumption: Valentine's Day in England c. 1660–1830. *Cultural and Social History*, 17(3), 295–314. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780038.2019.1646075>

Project Consultations 2

March 2 Reading Week

Mar 9. Class 8 The Caribbean: Sugar and Sex for the Powerful

- *How has Colonialism shaped human relations through food and sex?*

Brennan, Denise. 2002. "Selling Sex for Visas: Sex Tourism as a Stepping Stone to International Migration." In Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild (eds.), *Global Women: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, pp. 154-168. New York: Owl Books.

Mintz, Sidney. 2008 [1979]. "Time, Sugar, and Sweetness." In Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (eds) *Food and Culture*, pp. 99-103. London: Routledge.

Project Consultations 3

March 16. Class 9 "BOODLE FIGHT!" Colonialism, Militarism, and Commensality in the Philippines

- *How does something enter a "national cuisine"? How does violent history become interpreted as something "good"?*

Bender, Daniel E., and Adrian De Leon. 2017. "Everybody Was Booble Fighting: Military Histories, Culinary Tourism, and Diasporic Dining." *Food, Culture & Society* 21 (1): 25–41. doi:10.1080/15528014.2017.1398469.

March 23. Class 10 Fieldtrip: (TBC) Langar (Free Kitchen) at Sikh Temple (Wanchai 1 - 2.30pm (lunch included):

1. *Why give out free lunch? Is there such a thing as "free lunch"?*
2. *What does the practice of Langar tell us about Sikhism's understanding of inequalities and redistribution of resources?*

<https://asiasamachar.com/2025/05/13/swedish-anthropologist-studies-sikh-langar-tradition-in-multicultural-malaysia-the-star/>

“Hunger, Religion, and Public Anthropology.” <https://foodanthro.com/2021/01/19/hunger-religion-and-public-anthropology/>

Shum, Terence Chun Tat. 2023. “Performing Culinary Diaspora: Food Practices and Culinary Encounters of South Asians in Hong Kong.” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 44(1):604-624.

March 30. Class 11 Ramadan in Egypt: Islam, Piety, and Ambivalence

1. *What does fasting mean for a religion? How does NOT eating mediate one’s relationship with the Divine, and oneself?*
2. *How does a religious ritual get interpreted and practiced differently?*

Schielke, Samuli. 2009. “Being Good in Ramadan: ambivalence, fragmentation, and the moral self in the lives of young Egyptians.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, S24-S40.

Optional Readings: Tayob, Shaheed. 2020. “Muslim Food Culture.” *Oxford Encyclopedia of Research: Anthropology*. 1-15. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Project Consultations 4

Apr 6 Easter holiday

April 13. Class 12 Final Presentations of Film Projects