

INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

SYLLABUS // ANTH 1312 // SPRING 2024

DETAILS

CLASS

Days: Tuesdays & Thursdays

Time: 3:30-4:50 PM

Room: ELA 220

PROFESSOR

Name: Dr. Angela K. VandenBroek

Call me: Dr. V., Dr. VandenBroek, or Angela

Pronouns: She/Her/Hers

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 2.00 – 3.00 PM

Email: akvbroek@txstate.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course students examine the nature of cultural variation of populations in the present and recent past. Its subjects include social, political, economic, and ideological aspects of human cultures.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Social & Behavioral Science Component Outcomes:

- Students will apply empirical and scientific methods that contribute to the understanding of what makes us human.
- Students will examine behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on the individual, society, and culture.

Core Objectives/Competencies Outcomes:

- Critical Thinking: Students will demonstrate creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.
- Communication: Students will effectively develop, interpret, and express ideas through written, oral and visual communication
- Empirical and Quantitative Skills: Students will manipulate and analyze numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions.
- Social Responsibility: Students will demonstrate intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

COURSE SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

UNIT	WK	CLASS	TOPIC	READ	DUE	
Unit 1: Foundational Concepts	1	1	1/16	Hello & Welcome!		
		2	1/18	What is anthropology?	Perspectives Ch 1	
	2	3	1/23	What is culture?	Perspectives Ch 2	Concept Check-In 1
		4	1/25	How do we know things?	Perspectives Ch 3	
	3	5	1/30	How do people survive?	Perspectives Ch 5	Concept Check-In 2
		6	2/1	How do people communicate?	Perspectives Ch 4	
	4	7	2/6	How do people exchange their stuff?	Perspectives Ch 6	Concept Check-In 3
		8	2/8	How are people organized?	Perspectives Ch 7	
	5	9	2/13	Exam I		Concept Check-In 4
		10	2/15	Let's talk about magic and religion?	Perspectives Ch 11	
Unit 2: Key Conversations	6	11	2/20	Let's talk about gender and sex.	Perspectives Ch 10	Concept Check-In 5
		12	2/22	Let's talk about families and friends.	Perspectives Ch 8	
	7	13	2/27	Let's talk about identity.	Perspectives Ch 15	Concept Check-In 6
		14	2/29	Let's talk about race and racism.	Perspectives Ch 9	
	8	15	3/5	Let's talk about the world.	Perspectives Ch 12	Concept Check-In 7
		16	3/7	Exam II		
	Break	9	17	3/12	Spring Break	
			18	3/14	Spring Break	
Unit 3: Trending Anthropology	10	19	3/19	Cultural Anthropology Today	Perspectives Ch 13	
		20	3/21	Environment & The Anthropocene	Perspectives Ch 14	
	11	21	3/26	Health & Medicine	Perspectives Ch 17	Concept Check-In 8
		22	3/28	Science & Knowledge	Martin 1991	
	12	23	4/2	Technology & Media		Concept Check-In 9
		24	4/4	Business & Design	West 2014	
	13	25	4/9	Social Movements		Concept Check-In 10
		26	4/11	Community & Infrastructure	Not Just Bikes 2020	
	14	27	4/16	Anthropology from the Margins		
		28	4/18	Multimodal Anthropology	Schuster 2023	Project (Due Sunday)
	15	29	4/23	Cultural Anthropology at Work	Perspectives Ch 18	
		30	4/25	Cultural Anthropology in Public	Perspectives Ch 19	Survey (Due Sunday)
	16	31	5/7 at 2PM	Exam III		Exam III

Brown, Nina, Thomas Forsyth McIlwraith, and Laura Tubelle de González, eds. 2020. *Perspectives: An Open Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*. 2nd ed. American Anthropological Association.

Martin, Emily. 1991. "The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16 (3): 485–501.

West, Harry. 2014. "A Chain of Innovation: The Creation of Swiffer." *Research-Technology Management* 57 (3): 20–23.

Not Just Bikes. 2020. "How Suburban Development Makes American Cities Poorer [ST02]." YouTube. November 16, 2020.

Schuster, Caroline E. 2023. *Forecasts: A Story of Weather and Finance at the Edge of Disaster*. (Excerpt Only) University of Toronto Press.

Textbook Free Online: pressbooks.pub/perspectives // Other Texts Available on Canvas

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Assessment	Count	Points Each	% of Grade Each	Total Points	Total % of Grade
Exams	3	100	10%	300	30%
Concept Check-Ins	10	40	4%	400	40%
Project	1	300	30%	300	30%
Survey	1	—	—	—	—
Total				1000	100%

COURSE REQUIREMENTS DETAILS

- Exams** There will be three exams that cover material from lectures and readings. All exams will be hybrid. Students will complete the exams on Canvas (in person or at home). The exams are open note and open book. Students who choose to take the exam in class may talk and discuss the exam questions for the last 20 minutes of the exam. Exam questions will be randomized for each student and must be completed within the time limit. With notice, iPads with keyboards can be provided to a limited number of students for in-class participation.
- Concept Check-Ins** These assignments are quizzes taken on Canvas each week. The assignment may be completed as many times as necessary to get the desired grade. The goal is not to test your memory but to guide your studying practice. Complete the check-in before studying to see what you've retained. Then, revisit the material and do the assignment again until you've learned all the concepts from that week.
- Project** Each student will complete a project during Unit 3. Project options are listed on Canvas. Each project will require using cultural anthropology methods, reflecting on the data collected, and summarizing cultural insights.
- Survey** At the end of the semester, all students will complete a survey quiz that covers concepts from across the entire semester. The survey is used across all sections of ANTH 1312 to assess student's learning and progress. The survey will not count toward students' final grades. **However, it is mandatory and failing to complete the survey will result in an F in the class.**

COMMUNICATION

Names

Please call me Dr. VandenBroek or Dr. V. Please do not call me Miss, Ms., or Mrs. VandenBroek as I do not wish to use honorifics focused on my gender and marriage status. I use she/her/hers pronouns.

Our graduate instructional assistant is Afsana Akhter. Please call her Afsana. She uses she/her/hers pronouns.

Professionalism

Please remember that in my professional role, I am obligated by ethics, policy, and law to report to the university if you tell me about or I observe certain behaviors or incidents, like sexual harassment or misconduct (see section on mandatory reporting). I am also obligated by the nature of my position to evaluate and recommend your learning, character, and professionalism in and beyond the classroom (e.g., for awards, scholarships, graduate school applications, etc.). So, consider this relationship in our communications. This does not mean our communications need to be formal or deferential to my credentials. As a first-generation college student, I understand the damage that can be done by enforcing strict formality and the so-called “hidden curriculum” of higher education. So, I will not demean, penalize, or dismiss you for failing to adhere to the traditions and formalities of academia. Rather, consider how, for example, gossiping about your peers or telling me things like “I never do the reading” or “I skipped class to go to the Schlitterbahn” will impact my professional evaluation of you.

Communicating

The best way to reach me is by email or by coming to office hours. Students should contact me as soon as possible if they are struggling, have questions, or need assistance. You are also encouraged to come talk about your research interests, career plans, graduate school, or professionalization. I am a first-gen academic and so I know how difficult it is to navigate academics and one’s career without the knowledge others had. Please do not hesitate to reach out. Afsana can be reached via email at peh60@txstate.edu.

Hours

I am generally reachable by email at any time. However, I receive a large volume of emails and requests. So, I may not respond immediately to your email, especially at night and on weekends. Please note any deadlines or urgent circumstances in the email to help me triage your request and respond appropriately. Likewise, Afsana is not obligated to respond to communications at night or on the weekends.

MISCONDUCT & CRISIS REPORTING

As university employees, Afsana and I are legally obligated to report all incidents of sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, and dating violence students tell me about (including in assignments, Canvas communications, office hours, classroom discussions, etc.) to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX. If you would like to talk confidentially to someone who is not a mandatory reporter, please contact the Student Health Center, University Counseling, or the Attorney for Students. If you choose to talk to me about misconduct (sexual or otherwise), I will take your report seriously and act on it as truth.

Texas State offers a number of services and resources for students in crisis—including counseling, mentorship, financial assistance, food assistance, and more. If you report or exhibit concerning behavior or circumstances, I may refer you to these university services and resources. I believe that it is my ethical obligation to connect students in crisis or in danger of reaching crisis to support. For more information, see the “Here to Help” university website (<https://www.dos.txst.edu/heretohelp.html>).

ASSESSMENT

Concept Check-In and Exam Grading

Quizzes and exams are graded automatically by Canvas. Students may take the concept check-in quizzes as many times as they wish to reach their desired grade. Exams may be taken only once and must be completed within three hours of starting the exam.

Project Grades

Students will receive a letter grade for each criterion in the project rubric. These grades are equal to a percentage of the points for that assessment. This means that students will receive points using the following categorical scale (rather than a sliding scale). I find that categorical scales for qualitative assessments are fairer—as the difference between an A and a B can be meaningfully described while the difference between an 84 and an 83 is largely subjective and prone to bias.

Letter Grades	A	B	C	D	F (Credit)	F (No Credit)
% of Points	100%	85%	75%	65%	55%	0%

This scale includes two failing grades. An F with credit acknowledges that the student tried and put in a minimal amount of effort. An F without credit is used for missed assignments or criteria, issues of academic honesty, and for extreme cases of poor quality. This means that a student that attempts an assignment and puts in minimal effort will receive at least 55% of the assignment’s points. This is still failing, but it has a significantly lower impact on the student’s overall grade.

Final Grades

Final grades will be calculated by totaling the student’s earned points and comparing them to this scale.

Letter Grades	A	B	C	D	F
% of Points	100 % to 90.0%	< 90.0 % to 80.0%	< 80.0 % to 70.0%	< 70.0 % to 60.0%	< 60.0 % to 0%
Total Points	1000-900	899-800	799-700	699-600	599-0

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

You are expected to turn in all assignments by the deadline in the syllabus. That said, life is not simple and strict deadlines can create barriers for students unnecessarily. Assignments have a soft deadline (when the assignments should be completed) and a hard deadline (the absolute last moment it can be completed). There is no penalty for completing the assignment between the soft and hard deadline. There will be no extensions beyond the hard deadline.

You are responsible for making good choices about your workload and deadlines. The deadlines are intended to keep you on track throughout the semester and ensure that you do not fall irretrievably behind. Assignments are tied to specific class periods. **So, failing to stay on schedule will diminish your experience of the assignments and classwork.**

TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments should be completed or turned in via Canvas. As a last resort, if you are experiencing a technical issue with Canvas, you may submit the assignment via email to akvbroek@txstate.edu from your TXST email account with the subject line "COURSE NAME, ASSIGNMENT NAME." All files must be saved in a format accessible from a PC (e.g., DOCX, PDF, RTF, etc.). I will not accept files saved in a Mac only format (e.g., HEIC and Pages).

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Attendance is mandatory for every lecture class period. Exams may be taken in class or at home. Lectures in this class will not simply reiterate the material from a textbook. Rather, in class, I will summarize, contextualize, and present knowledge and material that has taken me decades to gather and learn through literature reviews, field research, and experience. You cannot just read the textbook and gain the same knowledge and experience as attending lecture. If you do not come to class, the only way to learn as much as you would in class is to do the research that I've spent my life doing. In a pinch, you can supplement with a few key readings or activities. But it is not the same.

I understand that life is not simple and strict rules can create barriers for students unnecessarily. Thus, you are responsible for making good decisions about your attendance. To incentivize good attendance, I offer these options for students who maintain a good attendance and participation record:

- **Option 1:** Students who have no more than two lecture absences (classes 2-9, 11-15, 19-30) and complete all assignments by the hard deadline, may drop their lowest exam grade or skip the final exam.
- **Option 2:** Students who have between three and five lecture absences (classes 2-9, 11-15, 19-30) and complete all assignments by the hard deadline, will have 10% added to their lowest exam grade.

I provide my slides as a study guide on Canvas. However, my slides are only an outline of the material. If you miss class, you will need to reach out to a peer to get notes and discuss the missed material.

ACCESSIBILITY

I strive to create an inclusive and accessible learning environment that balances the accessibility needs of each student. However, I may not always be aware of specific students' needs. If you require accommodation to be successful and participate in the course, please privately contact me as soon as possible. I may ask you to register with the university's office of disability services so that we can access the full range of resources needed to best support your learning. (More information: <https://www.ods.txstate.edu/>)

"It is the University's goal that learning experiences be as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible at 512.245.3451 to establish reasonable accommodations. Please be aware that the accessible table and chairs in this room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not usable."

ACADEMIC HONESTY & INTEGRITY

Academic honesty policies often focus on policing student work for violations—creating an unproductive adversarial relationship between faculty (cops) and students (suspected criminals). Therefore, I will not use services like TurnItIn to police your honesty. Instead, I've created assignments aimed to reduce the incentives for cheating—e.g., extended deadlines, assignment repeating, etc.—and to inspire individual reflection and learning rather than performance of knowledge.

Academic honesty isn't about simply following rules for rules' sake. Rather, academic honesty guidelines are about building a fair and equitable academic community and rewarding learning. Cheating and plagiarism are breaches of the positive learning environment and give students unfair advantages that create inequalities, fail to acknowledge the contributions of others, and impede student learning. Thus, suspected breaches of academic honesty will result in a mandatory meeting with me to determine a reparative plan. Students that fail to attend the meeting will receive an F on the assignment. Students who dispute my claim will have their case escalated to the university honor board for an impartial review.

Note about ChatGPT and Other AI Writing Tools

Students are welcome to use “artificial intelligence” tools (i.e., large language model chatbots) to improve their writing for this class. However, submissions with significant AI generated text (e.g., write an essay about X) are considered cheating and additionally, I caution students to consider the following:

(1) **AI is not actually intelligent.** Current AI technologies use models to predict the most likely string of text to follow the preceding string of text. The scale of these models makes their outputs impressive, but they do not evaluate or analyze the information they present, making them frequently inaccurate and poorly formulated. Do not rely on AI for informational inquiries.

(2) **Because AI is designed to predict the text most likely to come next (with a noise filter for a bit of randomness), AI generated text will always tend toward the most bland and popular text in its training data—**mostly the Internet. Additionally, in an effort to prevent the AI from “misbehaving” most AI chatbots have programmed guardrails that prevent them from producing results that their owners consider “controversial.” Thus, the kind of deep learning you will be expected to do in this class will be hindered by an overreliance on AI text generators.

(3) **As language models, AI chatbots are most useful as a writing tool not as an information service.** I find it to be most useful for revising text (e.g., rewrite this paragraph to be more succinct); change text's tone or style (e.g., rewrite this text in an academic humanities style); brainstorming wording for ideas (e.g., make a list of ten ways to say X); and for generating ideas (e.g., make a list of ten examples of Y).

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Every student has the right to a learning environment where you feel safe and welcome. This means statements and actions that promote—knowingly or unknowingly—discrimination or judgement based on race, sex, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, religion, physical appearance, physical or mental ability, or other aspect of one’s identity will not be tolerated. If you feel unsafe or unwelcome in the classroom, please approach me in confidence outside of class. If you are not comfortable speaking to me, please contact the university ombudsman for confidential consultation.

While every student has the right to feel safe and welcome, this does not mean that you will always feel comfortable. We will be discussing topics, such as politics, gender, and racism, that may be difficult for you or for your classmates. In order to discuss these issues while maintaining a safe and welcoming learning environment, we all must understand that we are all learning—including me—and in good faith engage in respectful conversation free from attacks, accusations, and microaggressions. This means classroom discussions are for listening, learning, curiosity, and growth; they are not for anger, adversarialism, debate, or shame. Every student has the right to ask questions, share their experiences, and to say things that might be wrong. Likewise, every student is responsible for learning from their mistakes, maintaining empathy for others’ experiences, and learning to accept reasonable feedback and criticism as an opportunity to learn rather than as a failure or attack.

Texas Senate Bill 17, the recent law that outlaws diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at public colleges and universities in Texas, does not in any way affect content, instruction or discussion in a course at public colleges and universities in Texas. Expectations and academic freedom for teaching and class discussion have not been altered post-SB 17, and students should not feel the need to censor their speech pertaining to topics including race and racism, structural inequality, LGBTQ+ issues, or diversity, equity, and inclusion.

RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF COURSE NOTES & MATERIALS

My lectures are protected by copyright law. They are my own original expression, and I record them at the same time that I deliver them in order to bring them under the protection of the U.S. copyright laws. Although you are authorized to take notes in class and create a derivative work from my lectures, the authorization extends only to making one set of notes for your own personal use, to share with classmates in your section of this course, and no other. You are not authorized to record my lectures, to provide class materials and notes to outside parties, or to make any commercial use of them without my express prior permission. Alternative provisions will be made for a student determined by the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to be entitled to academic accommodations.

STUDENT RESOURCES

Resource	Address
Professionalization in Anthropology	https://matthewwolfmeyer.com/professionalization-material/
Online Chicago Manual of Style	http://libproxy.txstate.edu/login?url=http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org
Purdue Writing Lab Logical Fallacies Reference	https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/logic_in_argumentative_writing/fallacies.html
UNC Writing Center Clichés Guide	https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/cliches/
Writing Center	https://www.writingcenter.txstate.edu/
Student Learning Assistance Center	https://www.txstate.edu/slac/
Library Research Tutorials	https://www.library.txstate.edu/research/diy-research.html
Library Research Consultation	https://txstate.libinsight.com/consultation/
Anthropology Librarian & Guides	https://guides.library.txstate.edu/prf.php?account_id=32671
University Counseling Center	https://www.counseling.txstate.edu/
Office of Disability Services	https://www.ods.txstate.edu/
Student Health Center	https://www.healthcenter.txstate.edu/
University Ombudsman	https://www.dos.txstate.edu/services/Ombuds-Services.html
University Honor Board	https://www.txstate.edu/honorcodecouncil/Student-Resources.html
Report Sexual Misconduct	https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?TexasStateUniv&layout_id=10
Report Discrimination	https://compliance.txst.edu/oeotix/discrimination.html
Ask for Help	https://www.dos.txst.edu/heretohelp.html