

**ANTHROPOLOGY 211  
LEARNING ACROSS CULTURES**

**BULLETIN INFORMATION**

ANTH 211: Learning Across Cultures (3 credit hours)

**Course Description:**

Classroom ethnography, bilingualism, cultural minorities, communication across cultural boundaries. Films, videotapes, and fieldwork in classroom settings.

**SAMPLE COURSE OVERVIEW**

The aim of this course is to expose students to critical anthropological, sociological, and psychological perspectives on educational *practice(s)* in the broadest sense of the term. In other words, this course affords an interdisciplinary understanding of education as both behavioral and social phenomena. Beginning in early childhood we will examine how “education” and other cultural theories of early child development are implicated in care-giving practices and how these practices have varied cross-culturally. From there, we then will examine the historical significance and emergence of specialized institutions devoted to the education of youth, examining from various perspectives how scholars have theorized the role(s) that schools play within modern societies. We will also examine contemporary educational institutions through the lens of ethnography and consider: how schools are institutions that reflect and enact societal ideologies of race, class, and gender; how different forms of educational practice shape children’s and youths’ learning [especially literacy development]; and how children and youth develop their senses of selves within sub-cultural practices in particular school cultures. Finally we consider how educational practices and policies are best understood in a holistic perspective.

**ITEMIZED LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Upon successful completion of Anthropology 211, students will be able to:

1. Recognize and apply basic anthropological concepts within the field of educational anthropology (culture, habitus, ethnocentrism, cultural relativism, universalism, social and symbolic capital)
2. Identify the logic of humanism and its implementation in theoretical and applied scholarship in educational anthropology, past and present;
3. Demonstrate understanding of how moral and ethical frameworks underscore diverse forms of social organization and caregiver/teacher-novice arrangements;
4. Identify, summarize and exemplify theoretical frameworks and interdisciplinary knowledge to explain behavioral and social phenomena in diverse educational settings
5. Identify and critique ethnocentric arguments and controversies that misrecognize the causes of behavioral and social diversity in educational settings

6. Develop critical reflexive reading, writing, and discussion skills that enable students to identify moral and ethical dilemmas in educational settings and professional practices.

### **SAMPLE REQUIRED TEXTS/SUGGESTED READINGS/MATERIALS**

1. Anyon, Jean. 2005. *Radical Possibilities: Public Policy, Urban Education, and a New Social Movement*. New York & London: Routledge Press.
2. Dyson, Anne Haas. 2003. *The Brothers and Sisters Learn to Write: Popular Literacies in Childhood and School Cultures*. New York: Teachers College Press.
3. Foley, Douglas E. 1990. *Learning Capitalist Culture: Deep in the Heart of Tejas*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
4. Tobin, Joseph J., Hsueh, Yeh, & Karasawa, Mayumi. 2009. *Preschool in Three Cultures Revisited: China, Japan, and the United States*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
5. Weis, Lois. 2005. *Class Reunion: The Remaking of the American White Working Class*. New York & London: Routledge Press.
6. Selected articles posted on Blackboard. These are flagged in the schedule below as [BB].

### **SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS AND/OR EXAMS**

1. **Attendance & Participation:** Participation in this course requires that you complete all of the assigned readings and come prepared to discuss them in-class. Expect to devote two to three hours of work outside of class for every hour of in-class time. Always bring the assigned readings to class with you. **Reading assignments** should be read for the date that they are listed on the syllabus so that you are prepared to discuss them in class. Finally, along with the readings, you should prepare at least **two discussion questions** for either the scheduled readings. Discussion questions should be open-ended and related to the issues raised in class or by the text. Post your questions prior to class on Blackboard's discussion board. Once a week, you should review all of the posted discussion questions & commentaries and choose to respond to at least two of them. Thus, discussion of these issues will take place inside the classroom as well as on-line. I will monitor the on-line submissions weekly [noting date and time of submission, as well as the quality of the questions and responses] and add my own commentaries in the on-line forum.
2. **Seminar Facilitator:** During the first week of class, I will pass around a sign-up sheet of available topics & dates for students to choose when they would like to serve as seminar facilitator. You must **serve as facilitator at least once** during the course of the semester. Depending on class size and interest, students may end up doing so twice, especially if the class prefers to do this assignment in teams of two. Seminar facilitators must have read the text in advance and have met with the professor at least three days prior to their turn to discuss how to prepare for the seminar. They must also prepare a brief handout, PowerPoint presentation, or some form of visual aid summarizing the theoretical and interdisciplinary frameworks evident in the assigned text as well as raise a series of questions to pose the class for an open-ended discussion of the social values, ethics and responsibilities involved in the research or case study. Email an electronic copy to the

professor at least 2 hours before class meets so that the appropriate number of photocopies may be made to distribute in class. It is the job of seminar facilitators to raise important issues & points of contestation to keep their peers engaged in deep discussion. It is also the responsibility of the facilitator's peers to come prepared with their own questions to help keep the discussion flowing.

3. **Video-Cued Ethnographic Exercise:** You must **do this exercise with a partner**. A detailed handout will be distributed in class detailing the procedures. The exercise will enable you and your partner to attempt to replicate a portion of Tobin et al.'s comparative ethnographic study by using one of his video-cued case study sites of a 'typical day' to elicit 3-5 people's interpretations of viewed and how these presuppose beliefs related to early childhood education. You all will moreover assess the degree to which the responses you elicit match any Tobin et al.'s findings.
4. **Monograph Paper:** You will be asked to write **one short analytic paper** over *one* of the required ethnographies. During the second week of class you will be able to sign up for the books indicated, but spaces are limited. Essay prompts for each text will be distributed in class the day we begin discussing the text. It will raise a particular issue and question that forces you to critically and constructively examine the ethnography using course concepts and frameworks. The paper should be no more than five-page paper, double-spaced. The paper will be due one week from the date when we finish reading the text in class.
5. **Journal Project:** You may choose to do either option A or option B. Student oral presentations on their projects will take place during the last two class meetings.

**Option A** requires that you gain permission to serve as a **volunteer in some sort of educational system** [e.g. preschool/daycare, elementary school, high-school, college level, church, different kinds of "outreach" programs where the intent is to educate the larger public]. Once you have started the volunteer position, **keep a typewritten journal** describing in-detail, your experiences as you are incorporated into this system. Consider what you learn from different constituent members as well as what they might learn from you. By the end of the course, you should have at least 10 entries in the journal of varying lengths. Once you have finished writing the journal, **write a final essay** [3-5 pages] that draws links between the context in which you volunteered and any of the relevant course readings/lectures/audio-visual materials presented in class.

**Option B** requires that you **choose a topic** related to a particular controversy in education and search for at least 10 articles in the popular media [for example, newspaper articles, magazine articles, blogs, television or radio news programs, movies, etc.] that deal with the controversy. **Keep a typewritten journal of ten entries** – one for each piece. Each entry should include a summary of the content of the original article, an examination of any explicit/implicit cultural assumptions at play, and whose points of view are being portrayed in each piece. Once you have finished writing the journal, **write a final essay** [3-5 pages] that draws links between the educational controversy

and any of the relevant course concepts, themes and materials presented in class.  
Submit your journal together with copies of articles/materials that you wrote about.

## **SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE WITH TIMELINE OF TOPICS, READINGS/ASSIGNMENTS, EXAMS/PROJECTS**

### **Class 1:** Introductions

Meet, Greet & Discuss Course Requirements

Sign-up for facilitation.

[Concepts: “kultur,” culture, four field anthropology, ethnocentrism, universalism & cultural relativism]

## **PART I. Child Socialization & Development in Cross-Cultural Perspective**

### **Class 2:** Historical Overview

Required Reading: Munroe & Gauvain [BB]

[Concepts: holism, field work, socialization]

### **Class 3:** Topic I: Families as Educators in Cross-Cultural Perspective

[Cross-cultural comparisons, ethnology, ethnography]

[Case study societies: France, India, Japan & Canada 1950s]

Video: Four Families

Monograph Sign-up

### **Class 4:** Theoretical Frame 1: Contemporary Interdisciplinary Psycho-cultural research on child development

Required Reading: Rogoff [BB]

[Concept: interdisciplinarity, ecological & Vygotskian frameworks to human development]

### **Class 5:** Topic II: Preschools in Cross-Historic and Cross-Cultural Perspectives

Video: Excerpts from Preschool in Three Cultures Revisited

Required Reading: Tobin et al. – 1 Introduction & 2 China

[Concepts: Cross cultural and intra-cultural variation]

### **Class 6:** [Case study societies: China, Japan, U.S.A. 1990s-2000]

Video: Excerpts from Preschool in Three Cultures Revisited

Required Reading: Tobin et al. – 3 Japan & 4 United States

### **Class 7:** Video: Excerpts from Preschool in Three Cultures Revisited

Required Reading: Tobin et al. – 5 Looking Across Time and Cultures

Handout: Preschool in Three Cultures Exercise

[Concepts: cross-historic comparisons]

## **PART II. OUT OF SCHOOL & IN-SCHOOL practices: Points of disjuncture and Convergence**

### **Class 8:** Theoretical Frame II: Sociocultural & Semiotic approaches to Literacies & Learning

Topic III: Ways with Words

Required Reading: Heath [BB]

[Concepts: race, social class, communicative competence, sociocultural approach to literacy]

[Case studies: three urban-rural communities in South Carolina that reflect an f race-class differences]

**Class 9:** Required Reading: Philips [BB]

[Concepts: participant structure, IRE sequence]

[Case Study: a multi-ethnic Native American Reservation in Oregon]

**Class 10:** Required Reading: Lemke [BB]

[Concepts: hegemony]

[Case study: middle school science class]

**Class 11:** Required Reading: Fader’s “Reading Jewish signs”; Orellana & Reynolds “Cultural modeling”

Video-Cued Assign Due

[Concepts: language socialization, cultural modeling]

[Case studies: Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn & Mexican immigrant children in Chicago]

**Class 12:** Required Reading: Dyson – Chapters 1-3

[Concepts: heteroglossia, genre, ‘textual toys’, entextualization]

[Case study: working class African American children in the San Francisco Bay Area]

**Class 13:** Required Reading: Dyson – Chapters 4-6

**Class 14:** Required Reading: Dyson – Chapters 7 & 8

### **PART III. EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS, SOCIAL REPRODUCTION & SCHOOL CULTURE**

**Class 15:** Theoretical Frame III: Functional Vs. Processual Approaches

Topic IV: Institutional and Professional Perceptions of ‘the child’

Required Reading: Spindler [BB]; Wortham [BB]

[Case studies: African American youth in Pennsylvania middle school]

**Class 16:** Required Reading: Mehan [Course Reader]; Rogers [BB]

Dyson paper due

[Concept: D/discourse, social construct]

[Case studies: White and African American children assessed as having a learning disability]

**Class 17:** Theoretical Frame

VII: Neo-Marxian Perspectives on Social Reproduction - Social Class, Race, & Gender

Topic V: Cross-Historical and Societal Perspectives

Required Reading: Willis, Paul [BB]

[Concepts: social reproduction, class consciousness, agency]

[Case study: White British working class males]

**Class 18:** Required Reading: Ogbu [BB]

[Concepts: “voluntary” Vs. “involuntary minorities, caste]

[Case study: African American working class youth]

**Class 19:** Required Reading: Foley – Introduction & Chapters 1-3

[Concepts: performance, identification, ethnicity]

[Case Study: White and Chicano youth in Texas]

**Class 20:** Required Reading: Foley – Chapters 4-5 & Appendices A-C

**Class 21:** Required Reading: Weis – Introduction, Epilogue, and Part I [Chapters 1 & 2]  
[Concepts: gender, habitus, symbolic domination]

[Case Study: White, middle aged working class males and females]

**Class 22:** Required Reading: Weis – Part II [Chapters 3-7] and the Theoretical coda  
Foley paper due

**Class 23:** Topic VI: Contemporary “Cultural” Controversies in Education

Required Reading: Delpit [BB]; Cousins [BB]

[Concepts: social & symbolic capital]

[Case study: mixed racial inner city youth in the North Eastern U.S.]

**Class 24:** Video: Fear and Learning at Hoover Elementary

Required Reading: Baquedano-López [BB]; González [BB]

Weis paper due

[Concepts: bi-lingualism, racialization]

[Case Studies: Latino & Latin American immigrant children and youth in California and Arizona]

**Class 25:** Topic VII: Public Policy, Urban Education, and a New Social Movement

Video: Testing Mrs. Grube

Required Reading: Anyon – Introduction & Chapters 1-5

[Concept: social movements; equity in education; social justice]

**Class 26:** Video: A Different Standard

Required Reading: Anyon – Chapters 6-10

**Class 27:** Student Oral Presentations

**Class 28:** Student Oral Presentations                      Anyon paper due

**Finals Week: Turn in Journal Project**