

# Anthropology 115 - Comparative Anthropology of Social Issues: Philadelphia, USA, the World

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Subject/Discipline: [Anthropology](#)  
School: [University of Pennsylvania](#)  
Project Area:

Spring 1998

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This seminar course is designed to introduce students to the anthropological approach to social issues, problems and concerns that communities face and try to resolve. The issues studied this term include: cultural/physical survival, making a living, employer-employee relations, immigrants, the community vs. the nation, and socialization. We will read ethnographic accounts of communities around the world and in other parts of the USA, broadening our understanding of the issues and communities in the reading through film, University Museum collections, other readings, and class discussion. Students' research projects on volunteer organizations/projects will then enable us to see whether or not the problems studied in other communities apply to Philadelphia.

**Goals of the course:** Through reading, research, and discussion, students will learn basic anthropological concepts; how anthropologists approach, analyze, and sometimes help resolve community problems; library skills (electronic and other data bases including archival material); field research skills pertinent to anthropology (interviewing, participant observation); how Philadelphia shares social problems with peoples in other cultures; and how Philadelphia and communities in other cultures work on these problems.

**Office hours of Dr. Sabloff:** T 11:00- noon, Th 11:00 - noon, by appointment, and before or after class.

**Classes:** The course is designed as a seminar, which means that everyone should be prepared to contribute to discussion every week. Weekly attendance is vital, and classes will revolve around

- Discussion of the readings;
- Discussion of the week's social issue(s) based on students' research projects;
- Films/videos relevant to the issues or people whose culture is being studied;
- Museum material relevant to the culture studied;

Background on and preparation for the next reading(s).

**Required Texts (to be purchased at the University of Pennsylvania Bookstore and on reserve at the Rosengarten Reading Room, Van Pelt Library)**

Bourgeois, Philippe. 1995. In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio. Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0521574609 (pbk.).

Constable, Nicole. 1997. Maid to Order in Hong Kong: Stories of Filipina Workers. Cornell University Press. ISBN: 0801483824 (pbk.).

Foley, Douglas. 1990. Learning Capitalist Culture: Deep in the Heart of Téjas. University of Pennsylvania Press. ISBN: 0812213149 PT (pbk.).

Hostetler, John and Gertrude Enders Huntington. 1992. Amish Children: Education in the Family, School and Community. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich. ISBN: 0030315921 (pbk.).

Stearman, Allyn MacLean. 1989. Yuqui: Forest Nomads in a Changing World. Holt, Rinehart, Winston. ISBN: 003022702x (pbk.).

Niezen: Defending the land??? See notes under the reading.  
Include during Black history Month. Read in 1 week by eliminating Ch. 6???

**Optional Readings (on reserve at the Rosengarten Reading Room, Van Pelt Library) make bulk pack; put in Engineering]**

Cassidy, John. "The Next Thinker: The Return of Karl Marx." The New Yorker (October 20 & 27, 1997), pp. 248-259.

Laumann, Edward et al. "Choice Theory: Sexual Decision Making." In The Social Organization of Sexuality, pp.8-15.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. "The Derivation of Cultural Needs" and "Basic Needs and Cultural Responses." In A Scientific Theory of Culture, chapters 9 and 10.

Ogbu, John. "Frameworks ó Variability in Minority School Performance: A Problem in Search of an Explanation." In Minority Education: Anthropological Perspectives (Jacob and Jordan, eds.). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

**Evaluation of student work:** Students will be graded on:

- Class participation (attendance AND contribution to discussion) ó 15% of grade.
- 3 papers on the reading ó 30% of grade (10% each). Students will select 4 of the 5 books assigned to write on (see below).
- Final exam (essay) ó 20% of grade.
- Research paper (20%) and oral presentation (15%) based on original research.

### **Questions to Guide the Reading/Class Discussion**

2000: who are the people?

What is the problem?

How to look at the problem:

Using anthropology

Using social theory

How is the problem manifest in Philly?

From 1998:

1. What are the social issues/community concerns presented in the reading?
2. What is the author's perspective on these issues, i.e., how does the author feel about the social issue(s)? What does the author think is the best way (or, a good way) to approach the social issue(s)? To answer these questions, we must ask:
  - What is the author's social/political philosophy?
1. How does the author try to convince the reader that his/her way of viewing the social issue is the right way (or a good way) to view the issue? That is,
  - What evidence does the author give the reader? And
  - How does the author organize the evidence (what is the significance of chapter titles, subtitles, order of the chapters, etc.)?
1. What do YOU think about the social issues presented in the reading? Do you look at them the same way as the author, or do you approach them from different experience and a different social/political philosophy?
2. Do you think the social issue is relevant to parts or all of Philadelphia? In what way?

### **Research Paper/Oral Presentation Guidelines**

The research paper and oral presentation should be about how a local volunteer organization or community program works on a social issue that (a) you find interesting, (b) is possible to research in Philadelphia, (c) has potential for you to stay involved as a volunteer after this class is over, (d) does not compromise your safety, and (e) has my permission. **DO NOT PROCEED WITHOUT MY PERMISSION AND A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMUNITY FROM ME.**

The research paper and oral presentation will include (a) how different people (anthropologists, other authors, community members and/or volunteer organizations) see the social issue/problem, and (b) how anthropology can be useful in studying/resolving the issue.

**Suggested research topics/social issues (you may also suggest your own):**

1. Cultural preservation or physical survival
2. Strengthening community support
3. Economic development
4. Political empowerment
5. Health issues: empowerment of a group or category of people
6. Safety issues
7. The community vs. Philadelphia or USA: who gets to decide local policy?
8. Training people for what (cultural reproduction)?
9. Globalization
10. The changing environment (impact on health, community, etc.)

**The research process is as follows:**

1. Find a social issue and community/volunteer organization where the issue can be studied.
2. Get professor's permission and letter of introduction to study the issue and community/group.

3. Conduct a literature search on the social issue AND the community/volunteer organization. Be sure to include anthropological writing on the issue and/or community.
4. Conduct ethnographic research (interviews, participant observation) on the social issue in the community of choice.
5. Write a first draft of the paper. If two people are working together on a paper and speech, sections should be clearly marked for authorship. That is, a two-person paper/speech should be twice as long as a one-person paper/speech. Each contributor should write some sections of the paper/speech and the contributor should take credit for the sections s/he wrote.
6. Write the first draft of the speech. (Same rules apply to two-person authorship of speech as to two-person authorship of paper.)
7. Check first draft of paper and speech with the professor.
8. Give oral presentation. Presentations may be straight-forward talks or they may be enhanced with maps, pictures or photographs, other relevant audio or visual material.
9. Hand in the completed research paper during reading week.

## Class Schedule

<p><b>Week 1 (1/15/98):</b> <b>Introduction:</b></p>	<p>What is anthropology? What are social issues? How do anthropologists work on social issues?</p>
<p><b>Week 2 (1/22): Issue: Cultural and physical survival</b> <b>People:</b> Yuqui of Bolivia</p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> <u>The Yuqui</u> by Allyn MacLean Stearman. Read the Preface (xi-xii), chapters 1-3. <b>Assignment:</b> Write 2-3 page paper on chapters 1-3 of <u>The Yuqui</u>, answering questions 1-6 found on p. 3 of syllabus (above).</p>
<p><b>Week 3 (1/29): Cont.</b></p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> <u>The Yuqui</u>, chapters 4 (pp. 79-87), 5 (pp. 135-140), and 6 (complete chapter). Malinowski, Bronislaw. "The Derivation of Cultural Needs" and "Basic Needs and Cultural Responses." On reserve in Rosengarten (Van Pelt Library). <b>Assignment:</b> Submit a short statement of your research project: name the community/group to be studied and the social issue to be studied.</p>
<p><b>Week 4 (2/5): Issues: Political Economy, Economic survival, gender relations</b> <b>People:</b> Puerto Rican immigrants in East Harlem, New York</p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> <u>In Search of Respect</u> by Philippe Bourgeois. Read Introduction, chapters 1-4. Edward Laumann, John Gagnon, et al. "Choice Theory: Sexual Decision Making." In <u>The Social Organization of Sexuality</u>, pp. 8-15. On reserve in Rosengarten. <b>Assignment:</b> Write 2-3 page paper on <u>In Search of Respect</u>, chapters 1-4, answering questions 1-6 from "Questions to Guide Reading."</p>
<p><b>Week 5 (2/12): Issues: Socialization (cultural reproduction), marginalization, gender relations</b></p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> <u>In Search of Respect</u>, chapters 5-7, 9. <b>Assignment:</b> Begin your research project: read relevant books, observe and participate in community activities.</p>
<p><b>Week 6 (2/19): Issues: Political economy, work, power relations, immigration</b> <b>People:</b> Filipina women in Hong Kong</p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> <u>Maid to Order</u> by Nicole Constable. Read Preface (pp. vii-xvii), chapters 1-5. <b>Assignment:</b> Write 2-3 page paper on <u>Maid to Order</u>, chapters 1-5, answering questions 1-6 from "Questions to Guide Reading."</p>
<p><b>Week 7 (2/26): Cont.</b></p>	<p><b>Reading:</b> <u>Maid to Order</u>, chapters 6-9. <b>Assignment:</b> Continue to work on your</p>

	research project.
<b>Week 8 (3/5): Issues:</b> Cultural reproduction, socialization, racism, sexism <b>People:</b> Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, and Anglos in Texas	<b>Reading:</b> <u>Learning Capitalist Culture</u> by Douglas Foley, Introduction, chapters 1-3 <b>Assignment:</b> Write 2-3 page paper on <u>Learning Capitalist Culture</u> , first half of data chapters, answering questions 1-6 from "Questions to Guide Reading."
<b>SPRING BREAK 3/7 - 3/15 (NO CLASS)</b>	
<b>Week 9 (3/19):. Cont.</b>	<b>Reading:</b> <u>Learning Capitalist Culture</u> , chapters 4-5; Appendix A Part 2 (pp. 188-195), and Concluding Remarks (pp. 195-205) Optional: Appendix A, Part 1 (pp. 161-187), Appendix B (206-231) <b>Assignment:</b> Continue to work on your research project.
<b>Week 10 (3/26): Issue:</b> Who determines what children learn in schools? <b>People:</b> The Amish of Pennsylvania	<b>Reading:</b> <u>Amish Children: Education in the Family, School, and Community</u> , chapters 1-4 <b>Assignment:</b> Write 2-3 page paper on <u>Amish Children</u> , chapters 1-4, answering questions 1-6 from "Questions to Guide Reading."
<b>Week 11 (4/2): Cont.</b>	<b>Reading:</b> <u>Amish Children</u> , chapters 5-7 <b>Assignment:</b> Submit first draft of research paper.
<b>Week 12 (4/9): Issues:</b> Community Health and gender relations (Ms. Clemmons will direct class).	<b>Reading:</b> To be assigned. <b>Assignment:</b> Submit first draft of oral presentation notes.
<b>Week 13 (4/16): Oral presentations</b>	
<b>Week 14 (4/23): Oral presentations and semester review</b>	<b>Reading week:</b> Submit final draft of research paper. <b>Final exam:</b> Short-answer (on anthropological concepts learned) and essay (comparison of readings).