

Kinship and Social Organization

ANT 3103

Spring 2014 | MWF 12:00 – 12:50 | MH 2.01.24

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: MW 1:00 – 2:30,
TR 2:00 – 3:30, or by appt.

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Course Description

From the catalogue: “Comparative analysis of kinship and social organization as they pertain to marriage, family, sexuality, and other social relationships. (Formerly titled “Social Organization”).”

The study of **kinship**, the most basic level of **social organization**, has historically been a central focus within anthropology. The study of kinship has recently experienced a revival in anthropology as scholars have returned to questions of **relatedness** as it **emerges in people’s everyday lives**. This course takes a **critical** approach to the anthropological understanding of kinship. We will utilize various theoretical and ethnographic texts as points from which to examine how kinship is connected to **identity** and **power**. The **six guiding foci** of this course will be: **the family, gender, personhood, bodily substance, governmentality, and biotechnology**.

This course counts as three (3) upper-division credit hours towards: an elective for any major; an upper-division Cultural Anthropology elective for anthropology majors and minors; or an upper-division elective for the Women’s Studies major or minor.

Course Materials

The following texts are **required** for this course:

Conklin, Beth. 2001. *Consuming Grief: Compassionate Cannibalism in an Amazonian Society*.

Franklin, Sarah. 2013. *Biological Relatives: IVF, Stem Cells, and the Future of Kinship*.

Weston, Kath. 1991. *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*.

All other readings will be available on Blackboard Learn.

Course Objectives

This course will provide students with an opportunity to:

- Identify and explain main concepts, theories, and terms in the anthropological study of kinship
- Explain the importance of cross-cultural approaches to studying kinship
- Identify and critique theoretical and methodological strengths and weaknesses of course texts
- Improve writing and critical thinking skills by synthesizing course content in discussion questions and essays
- Analyze their own kinship network from an anthropological perspective

Course Structure

This course will be run in a **seminar** format. A seminar structure simply means that each class period will focus on a set of questions arising from that day's reading. As seminars are **discussion-based** (rather than lecture-based), each person is expected to actively participate on a regular basis.

There will be little straight lecture in this course; rather, the instructor will lead discussions with the expectation that we will engage in a **dialogue**. This means listening intently to one another and responding in respectful and meaningful ways, *always with an eye toward course content*. Any discussion that is unrelated to course material will be considered a distraction and could result in lost participation points. As this class is only 50 minutes long, we do not have time to talk about things that are not directly relevant to the course.

*Seminar discussion is **not a competition**; rather, the purpose is to create understanding by bringing different viewpoints and questions to the table.*

Please see Course Policies (p. 4-5) for more information on inappropriate classroom behavior.

A Note on Course Readings

This course requires **reading, writing, and in-class discussion**. You are expected to come to class **each day** prepared for discussion by having read the assigned readings **thoroughly** for **content**. This means actively engaging with the text by making notes in the margins and asking yourself questions as you read. Passive reading, as you do for pleasure or in your daily life, *will not suffice for this course*.

Readings for this course follow college-standard reading guidelines for upper-division cultural anthropology coursework. Specifically, the required readings for this course will **average** about 100-200 pages per week.

Article readings will be made available through Blackboard Learn at least one week before the due date. *You should print out article readings and bring them with you to class.* The instructor may randomly pick up printed copies of your readings over the course of the semester to count towards your participation grade.

If it becomes clear at any time that students are not reading the assigned material, daily short-answer reading checks will be administered until a supermajority (2/3) of students demonstrate that they are doing the reading.

Finally, it is perfectly acceptable to come to class not understanding the reading. Give it your best shot! We will work through it together until it makes sense.

Course Requirements

Your continued enrollment in this course is acknowledgment that you are aware of and agree with the course requirements and policies.

Participation (15%)

Students are expected to come to and participate in class regularly. Participation consists of attendance and in-class activities. **You must be present in class to obtain participation credit! NO EXCEPTIONS!** I reserve the right to withhold credit from any person who arrives to class late or leaves class early.

Attendance is taken randomly during the semester. In-class assignments must be turned in at the end of class to receive credit. These may include answering questions in groups, film guides, worksheets, and other active learning exercises. Further, I may periodically collect printed out readings to ensure students are actively engaging with the texts (this means they will be graded based on how evident your engagement with the text is, e.g., highlighting/underlining *and/or* marginalia or reading notes—**NOT** just highlighting/underlining).

Participation points accumulate over the semester. I will drop at least 5 points from the max total at the end of the semester (about 2 - 5 days of class). Dropping these points is *in lieu of make-ups* for missed class (see make-up policy on page 5). Any points received over the total are kept as extra credit.

Discussion Questions (20%) - ****BEGINS IN WEEK 2****

Students will submit a pair of two discussion questions for each day's reading(s) via Blackboard Learn. Questions are due by **8:00 a.m.** the day of class in which the reading is being discussed. Questions will not be accepted past 8:00 a.m., and no late work or make-ups for discussion questions will be accepted. Your *six* lowest DQ grades (including 0s) will be dropped at the end of the semester. Specific guidelines and instructions will be made available via Blackboard Learn.

Take-Home Essays (40%)

The instructor will provide two take-home essay prompts (along with directions and a rubric) during the course. The midterm essay (15%) will cover material from the first half of the course, and the final essay (25%) will be cumulative and will contain a reflective component. Students will be given the prompt for the midterm essay on Friday 2/28 and it will be due one week later. The prompt for the final essay will be distributed on the last full day of class and will involve incorporating material from the kinship project. Specific guidelines, instructions, and rubrics will be made available via Blackboard Learn.

Kinship Project (25%) - ****See course calendar for due dates!****

Students will be required to do a semester-long kinship project. The project will have multiple components that must be submitted during the semester. Each component of the project will require the student to apply concepts and ideas from the course to their own kinship network. The components are meant to be exercises in *concise* writing; they should be short and write to the point. Components will be graded on their effectiveness in succinctly answering questions by drawing on course readings and discussions, as well as on strength of argument, style, and grammar.

Helpful hint: The reflective portion of the final essay will require you to draw on your kinship project, so you will be expected to culminate and reflect upon the project in your final course essay.

Specific directions as well as grading rubrics will be made available on Blackboard Learn.

Extra Credit

There are no individual extra credit opportunities in this course. Extra credit is offered to everyone or no one. I reserve the right to assign course-wide extra credit assignments. Extra credit opportunities will be announced in class. *Do not ask me for individual extra credit assignments.*

Grading Scale
A+ = 97-100
A = 93-96
A- = 90-92
B+ = 87-89
B = 83-86
B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79
C = 73-76
C- = 70-72
D+ = 67-69
D = 63-66
D- = 60-62
F = <59

Course Policies

Technology

This course has a ***strict no electronics*** policy. All laptops, tablets, cell phones, and other electronic devices must be powered ***OFF*** or placed on SILENT (***NOT*** vibrate!). If you have a situation that you need to keep your phone available, *let me know before class begins.*

Students who are caught texting during class will be asked to leave for the day. For each time that students are caught texting, they will be referred to judicial affairs for class disruption and will be subject to a **five-point deduction from their *final averages* for each infraction.**

Students wishing to record audio of class must get prior written approval from the course instructor.

Blackboard Learn

Blackboard Learn is a tool for course-related content. I use BBL to post readings, announcements, and grades. Students will submit discussion questions and some assignments through BBL. Students should check BBL regularly for announcements and to keep track of their grades. ~~The communication areas of BBL will remain closed for this course.~~ **Please see addendum on page 9. I do not post my lecture notes or slides to BBL.**

Late Work and Make-Ups

Unless otherwise stated, all assignments are due at the beginning of class.

- Participation – No late work and no make-ups.
- Discussion Questions – No late work and no make-ups.
- Midterm Essay – For each **calendar day** late, grade is reduced by 25 points. After 4 days, essay receives a 0.
- Final Essay – No late work or make-ups.
- Kinship Project – For each **calendar day** a component is late, its grade is reduced by 25 points. After 4 days, component receives a 0. Students may make an ***in-person*** request for an extension on ***ONE*** individual component. Extension requests over e-mail ***will not be accepted or responded to.*** Extension requests must be made ***BEFORE*** the due date.
- Extra Credit – Must be turned in at assigned due date. No make-ups and no late work.

Students who miss class due to University-sanctioned travel or events will be allowed to make up missed work *only with proper supporting documentation.* Students who miss class for the observance of a religious holy day must notify the instructor ***prior*** to the absence.

******It is completely the instructor's discretion whether or not and in what manner to accommodate student requests for make-ups.******

Academic Integrity

There is a ***strict*** zero-tolerance policy for scholastic dishonesty. Any student caught cheating or plagiarizing work will be reported to the Department Chair and to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for proper disciplinary action. ***NO EXCEPTIONS.***

Scholastic dishonesty is defined by the University as including but not limited to “cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an exam for another person, or any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.” (<http://www.utsa.edu/infoguide/appendices/b.html#sd>)

Scholastic dishonesty is harmful to yourself, your peers, and the University as a whole. If you have any questions regarding scholastic dishonesty, please do not hesitate to ask. Better to be safe than sorry!

NOTE: Neither the Anthropology Department staff nor the instructor will report grades by phone, fax, or e-mail. Grades are only reported via Blackboard Learn or in person.

Disclaimer: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. Any changes will be announced in class and a revised syllabus will be made available on Blackboard Learn.

Support Services for Persons with Disabilities

Students who are registered with the Office of Disability Services and who may require additional support to facilitate success in this course should contact the instructor *as soon as possible* to make arrangements. For more information, please visit <http://www.utsa.edu/disability/>.

Classroom Behavior

Students will adhere to the University's Nondiscrimination and Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policies (UTSA Handbook of Operating Procedures, Section 9.1).

We will be discussing topics and ideas in this course that are sensitive and deeply personal to many people. As anthropologically minded persons, we should strive to listen to others with an open mind, even when we disagree. We should all confront our biases during this course, and we should be able to discuss them freely and openly without fear or ridicule. I encourage all people to speak up in class, but do so with decorum and maturity. Further, in this course all people are not entitled to their opinions; rather, you are entitled to what you can make a cogent argument for.

I maintain an **EXTREMELY STRICT** zero-tolerance policy for any disruptive language or behavior that negatively impacts the establishment of a safe learning environment. This includes (but is not limited to): violent, belligerent, or insulting remarks; racism; sexism; homophobia; transphobia; ableism; anti-ethnic slurs; bigotry; and any other inflammatory language, spoken or written, founded on ignorance or hate. ***This class is a safe space for all people to be free of harassment and prejudice.*** You do not have the right to disrespect or intimidate people. Any disruptions that interfere with the safe learning environment of this classroom will be reported to Judicial Affairs.

With this in mind, it is expected that all students will help maintain an open and respectful environment during class periods. In order to do this, please:

- Refrain from personal conversations during class.
- Be respectful during discussions—no personal attacks! If you disagree with someone, state why you disagree with their ideas without attacking them personally.
- Keep discussions on topic and relevant to the course.
- Arrive to class on time.
- Do not consistently leave in the middle of class.
- Wait until class is dismissed before packing up your belongings.

If there are any issues in class that I am unaware of, please do not hesitate to bring them to my attention. If you wish to do so anonymously, you may leave a note in my mailbox in the Department of Anthropology (MH 4.03.38).

Any student who violates classroom behavior etiquette will be asked to leave class for the day and may be referred to Judicial Affairs. For each violation, students will be subject to a **five-point deduction from their final averages**.

Instructor Responsibilities

Students can expect that the instructor will adhere to the following:

- Be on time and prepared for each class.
- Help all students understand course material, including answering questions during and after class and in office hours.
- Be respectful of all students and treat all students equally without preferential treatment by adhering to the terms laid out in this syllabus.
- Be reasonably available over e-mail outside of class and office hours. I try to respond to e-mail as soon as I receive it, and I leave my e-mail open while at home. If you do not hear back from me within a few hours, you are welcome to try e-mailing me again to follow up, particularly if it is important. If you still do not hear back from me, there may be a technological issue and your e-mail may not have arrived.

For more information regarding student counseling services, tutoring services, the Student Code of Conduct and Scholastic Dishonesty, Students with Disabilities, transitory/minor medical issues, supplemental instruction, and the Roadrunner Creed, please visit UTSA's Common Syllabus website at <http://www.utsa.edu/syllabus>.

Course Calendar

Week	Date	Topic	Readings (* = ethnography) [# pg] = page count	Kinship Project
1	M 1/13	Introductions	None	
	W 1/15	Thinking anthropologically	What is Anthropology? (AAA) [1 pg] We Aren't the World (Watters) [9 pg]	
	F 1/17	What is kinship?	Excerpt from <i>After Kinship</i> (Carsten Ch. 1) [16 pg]	Crude Kinship Chart (In-Class)
2	M 1/20	<i>No Class - Martin Luther King Jr. Day</i>		
	W 1/22	Descent	Functionalism and structural-functionalism (Barnard) [10 pg]	
	F 1/24	Descent	The Nuer (Evans-Pritchard) [15 pg]	
3	M 1/27	Alliance	Structuralism in Anthropology (Stasch) [4 pg] "Kinship" from <i>Structuralism and Semiotics</i> (Hawkes) [4 pg]	Descent
	W 1/29	Alliance	Excerpts from: <i>The Foundations of Structuralism</i> (Clarke) [30 pg]	
	F 1/31	Alliance	Clarke continued (<i>submit 2 new reading questions</i>)	
4	M 2/3	Schneider's Critique	What is Kinship All About? (Schneider) [18 pg]	Alliance
	W 2/5	Schneider's Critique	The Fundamental Assumption in the Study of Kinship (Schneider) [13 pg]	
	F 2/7	The Family	Is There a Family? (Collier et al.) [11 pg]	
5	M 2/10	The Family	It's All in the Family (Collins) [20 pg]	Nature-Culture
	W 2/12	Sex/Gender	All Made Up (Morris) [25 pg]	
	F 2/14	Sex/Gender	The Institution of Woman-Marriage in Africa (Greene) [18 pg]	
6	M 2/17	Kinship & Gender	Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual? (Butler) [30 pg]	Kin & Family
	W 2/19	Kinship & Gender	Butler continued (<i>submit 2 new reading questions</i>) <i>Guest Lecture</i>	
	F 2/21	Queering Kinship	* Weston Ch. 1 & 2 [42 pg]	
7	M 2/24	Queering Kinship	* Weston Ch. 3 [34 pg] Suggestions for Midterm Essay Prompts DUE! (<i>Optional, extra credit</i>)	
	W 2/26	Queering Kinship	* Weston Ch. 4 [26 pg]	
	F 2/28	Queering Kinship	* Weston Ch. 5 [34 pg] Distribute Midterm Essay Prompt	
8	M 3/3	Queering Kinship	* Weston Ch. 6 & 7 [58 pg]	Kin & Gender
	W 3/5	Queering Kinship	* Weston Ch. 8 [20 pg]	
	F 3/7	Catch-up Day	<i>Midterm Essay DUE!</i> None - Catch up + mid-term eval (Double participation points!)	
Spring Break 3/10 - 3/14				

IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY DATES:

1/29 - Census date. Last day to drop class without grade and receive a refund.

3/3 - Midterm grades due by 2:00 p.m. Students who stopped attending or never attended class and who receive financial aid will be required by federal law to repay funds for classes not attended!

Course Calendar

Week	Date	Topic	Readings (* = ethnography) [# pg] = page count	Kinship Project
9	M 3/17	Personhood	Making up People (Hacking) [14 pg]	
	W 3/19	Personhood	On Personhood (Comaroff & Comaroff) [12 pg]	
	F 3/21	Biopolitics	Right of Death and Power Over Life (Foucault) [20 pg]	
10	M 3/24	Governmentality	<i>Governmentality</i> (Excerpt) (Dean) [18 pg]	
	W 3/26	Guest Lecture: Heide Castañeda	None	
	F 3/28	National Reproduction	Eggs & Wombs: The Origins of Jewishness (Kahn) [16 pg]	
11	M 3/31	Substance	Substance and Relationality: Blood in Contexts (Carsten) [21 pg]	
	W 4/2	Bodies & Substance	* Conklin Introduction, Part I [62 pg]	
	F 4/4	Bodies & Substance	* Conklin Part II [46 pg]	
12	M 4/7	Bodies & Substance	* Conklin Part III [70 pg]	Personhood & Governmentality
	W 4/9	Bodies & Substance	* Conklin Part IV, Afterword [73 pg]	
	F 4/11	Biotechnology	* Franklin Introduction [30 pg]	
13	M 4/14	Biotechnology	* Franklin Ch. 1 [37 pg]	
	W 4/16	Biotechnology	* Franklin Ch. 2 [37 pg]	
	F 4/18	Biotechnology	* Franklin Ch. 4 [35 pg]	
14	M 4/21	Biotechnology	* Franklin Ch. 6 [37 pg]	
	W 4/23	Biotechnology	* Franklin Ch. 8 & Afterword [16 pg]	
	F 4/25	Cross-Discipline Critiques	On Kinship and Marriage: A Critique of the Genetic and Gender Calculus of Evolutionary Psychology (McKinnon)	
15	M 4/28	Kinship in Media	No Reading – discussion on kinship in media submissions	Kinship in Media
	W 4/30	Conclusion	No Reading	Substance & Biotechnology
	F 5/2	Student Study Day – NO CLASS!		
FINAL MEETING TIME: Friday, May 9, 12:30 – 3:00 p.m. (Final essay due in person at this time!)				

IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY DATES:

4/14 – Deadline for application for Fall 2014 graduation.

4/28 – Last day to drop class and receive “W” grade.

5/1 & 5/2 – Student study days, no classes.

5/13 – Final grades due by 2:00 p.m.

Syllabus Addendum – 1/25/2014

Blackboard Learn Discussion Boards

I have decided to open up the discussion board on BBL for this course. I am doing this because there may be days where we simply do not have enough time for everyone to have the opportunity to share their thoughts. I want to provide an outlet for those thoughts and for further discussion to take place outside of class.

I will moderate the discussion forum, and any posts that break the rules provided below will be deleted. Students who make posts that I have to delete are subject to disciplinary action in line with classroom disruption penalties outlined on page 5 of this syllabus (including subtracting 5 points from final course average for each infraction).

In addition to the course policies laid out in this document, the following rules will be adhered to on the forums:

- No asking for class notes—do this elsewhere.
- No flaming or attacking people.
- No sharing of copyrighted material.
- Posts must be on topic for the course (this is not a general discussion forum about whatever you want).

If at any time I feel that the discussion boards are not being conducive to furthering the course goals and objectives, I will close them down.