

PRA-943 Cultural Anthropology in Christian Perspective

- Concordia Seminary, St. Louis -

Spring/Summer 2019
PRA-943
Time: TBD
Room: TBD

Rev. Ken Chitwood
Office: N/A
Office Hours: Via Appointment
Email: kchitwood@ufl.edu
Phone: 832.795.3564

COURSE INFORMATION

- **Course Description**

A graduate seminar that explores the understandings and tools of cultural anthropology and their usefulness in communicating the Christian message in mission and congregational contexts.

- **Graduate School Ph.D. Outcomes**

- 1.5 Develop an advanced understanding of the nature of theological concepts and the function of theological formulation in the life of a Christian community
- 2.1 Develop an exceptional ability for independent inquiry in the framing of theological questions
- 2.4 Develop and exceptional ability to apply scholarship to contemporary issues within the context of creedal Christianity
- 3.1 Articulate the results of exemplary scholarly research in a field of the specialist's choosing offering exemplary leadership to the benefit of church and world in both academic and nonacademic settings as the church awaits with hope the return of its Lord

- **Curricular Goals**

This course is designed to provide opportunities and occasions for the students to grow in knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that they may be competent to do the following:

- To understand the goal of anthropological research and description — to make the strange more familiar and the familiar more strange;
- critically evaluate extant theories in the related fields of anthropology and ethnography;
- comprehend and wrestle with the methodological presuppositions of the anthropological worldview;
- identify and put to use the best practices in ethnographic fieldwork;
- carefully and critically consider how an anthropological lens might help us view Scripture through a cultural lens;
- discern between the variances of culture and theology in our own tradition; and
- re-consider missiological philosophies, principles, and practices in light of a critical anthropological point-of-view.

COURSE EXPERIENCES

- **Course Schedule and Calendar**

The outline of topics for the course is as listed below. For a fuller description, see the final pages of the syllabus.

- **Course Outline**

- I. WHY Cultural Anthropology?**

- An understanding of the goal of anthropological research and description.

- II. The WHAT of Anthropology**

- A critical exploration and evaluation of extent (past and present) theories in the related fields of anthropology and ethnography.

- Comprehending and wrestling with the methodological presuppositions of the anthropological worldview.

III. HOW to Think *and* Act like an Anthropologist in Christian Perspective

- Identifying and putting to use the best practices in ethnographic fieldwork.
- Carefully and critically considering how an anthropological lens might help us view Scripture through a cultural lens.
- Toward discerning between the variances of culture and theology in our own tradition.
- Re-considering missiological philosophies, principles, and practices in light of a critical anthropological point-of-view.

- **Course Bibliography**

- **Required**

- Michael V. Angrosino, *Doing Cultural Anthropology*, Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2007.
 - Robert M. Emerson, *Contemporary Field Research*, Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2001.
 - Matthew Engelke, *How to Think Like an Anthropologist*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.
 - Brian Howell, *Short-Term Mission: An Ethnography of Christian Travel Narrative and Experience*, IVP Academic, 2012.
 - Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible*, Harper-Collins, 2009.
 - Michael Rinkiewich, *Soul, Self, and Society: A Postmodern Anthropology for Mission in a Postcolonial World*, Wipf and Stock, 2012.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

- **Assignments**

The assignments for the course are listed below. For a fuller description, see subsequent pages of the syllabus.

ASSIGNMENT	LENGTH	DUE DATE
'Doing Cultural Anthropology' Assignments <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thick Description• Life History Interview• Observing a "Church-place"• Visual/Virtual Ethnography• Archival/Museum Analysis	3-5 pages	June 10
<i>Poisonwood Bible</i> Report	3-5 pages	June 13
Anthropological Analysis of Pericope	2-3 pages	June 18
Chapter Seminar Presentations (x3)	10 mins	Sign-up
Class Presentation of Ethnographic Project	15 mins	June 19-21
Ethnographic Seminar Project	16–20 pages	June 21

Assignments are due on the date indicated. Please save your assignments in Microsoft Word according to the rubric: LastName_AssignmentTitle.doc(x) (for example, Chitwood_Syllabus.docx) and e-mail them to kchitwood@ufl.edu at any time on the date indicated.

Class attendance and participation are part of your grade. The instructor reserves the right (1) to lower your grade for absence and (2) not to accept or to the lower the grade of assignments submitted late. Failure in any assignment may result in failure of the course.

- **Grading Scale**

Assignment	Percentage of Grade
Class Attendance and Participation	15%
Doing Cultural Anthropology Assignments	25%
<i>Poisonwood Bible</i> Report	5%
Anthropological Analysis of Pericope	5%
Chapter Seminar Presentations	15%
Ethnographic Project Presentation	10%
Ethnographic Seminar Project	25%

95%-100%	A
90%-94%	A-
85%-89%	B
80%-84%	B-
75%-79%	C
70%-74%	C-
65%-69%	D
60%-64%	D-
0%-59%	F

COURSE POLICIES

- **Academic Honesty**

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception and is an educational objective of this institution. All seminary policies regarding academic integrity apply to this course.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students.

For any material or ideas obtained from other sources, such as the text or things you see in the web, in the library, etc., a source reference must be given. Direct quotes from any source must be identified as such. Any instances of academic dishonesty will be pursued.

- **Attendance and Participation**

Under “Class Attendance,” the Student Handbook reads:

“Classroom involvement by means of discussion and exchange between students and instructors is a contribution to the learning and the teaching process and promotes the welfare of the whole class, as well as that of the individual.”

As a result, attendance and participation serve as the substratum of the student’s grade. If the student’s attendance and participation are perceived to be at a “C” level, then the probability is the student would not receive a grade much higher than a “C” in the course.

Participation may be measured in a variety of ways including professorial and peer monitoring of class discussion and small discussion groups and various written submissions to the instructor. Students individually or in small groups may also be called upon to lead class discussions of the readings or engage in impromptu analysis of the readings.

Please inform the instructors of any expected absences. More than two explained absences (whether by the student or the Dean of Ministerial Formation) and any unexplained absences may result in a letter grade reduction. (Explained absences constitute informing the instructor either before or after the absence of the reason for one’s absence.)

The instructor reserves the right to lower or not to accept any assignment submitted late. Failure in any assignment may result in failure in the course.

- **Technology Requirements:**

There are no specific technology requirements for this course. Laptops or other electronic devices are permitted for the purpose of taking notes and other computer-based activities related to the course and approved by the instructor. You are more than welcome to have your mobile phone, tablet, or other Wi-Fi enabled device with you in class. Your distractions are your choices. We are adults here and the instructor will let you decide how you might best use course-time — either to pay attention, contribute, and grow because of it or watch Netflix with subtitles.

- **Confidentiality:**

In order to maximize your learning experience there will be opportunities in class for self-reflection and sharing with classmates your personal stories. In order to foster a safe and honest environment, it is expected that you will keep confidentiality. Keeping confidentiality is a major component of the pastoral ministry.

- **Learning Differences & Accommodations:**

Students with individual learning needs are asked to speak to the instructor in order to make accommodations. Students seeking further accommodations beyond those offered by the professor are asked to contact the Dean of Ministerial Formation and follow the instructions of that office for obtaining accommodations.

- **Syllabus Revision:**

Although the syllabus has been constructed to facilitate our learning in an effective manner, the course instructor may modify the standards and requirements set forth in this syllabus for the benefit of the students at any time. Notice of such changes will be by announcement in class.

- **Consultation:**

I welcome the opportunity to meet with you or to consult with you over the phone. I encourage you, however, to set an appointment so that other activities do not detract from my attention to your concerns. The following information is offered to facilitate student-instructor consultations.

Office: N/A

Hours: By appointment

Email: kchitwood@ufl.edu

Phone: 832.795.3564

Course Parts:

Part A:

This portion of the course will be conducted online with a link to an Adobe Connect online classroom. There will be two two-hour online sessions prior to the start of the intensive (Part B) on June 10, 2019.

This online portion will focus on the first module of the course on the WHY of Cultural Anthropology. It will also introduce students to the ethnographic seminar project so that they can begin working on the assignment before the intensive begins.

Part B:

This portion of the course will consist of an intensive on campus between June 10-21, 2019. It will pick-up where the online portions of the course left-off and continue with the WHAT and HOW of Cultural Anthropology culminating in the presentation and submission of the ethnographic seminar project.

Course Outline:

Spring 2019:

Class Period 1: WHY anthropology? [DATE]

- Why anthropology for you? Another way of introductions...
- Why anthropology in general? ("The Lesson of the Owl")
- Why anthropology for pastors/seminarians/theologians?
- "Distinguishing the Variables of Culture from the Constants of Theology"
- Discuss "Tasks to Complete"

Class Period 2: Mid-Semester Check-In [DATE]

Tasks to Complete During Spring 2019:

- "Doing Cultural Anthropology" Projects (except for "field trip")
 - Thick Description (Emerson Ch. 1, 3, 4, & 11 & Angrosino Ch. 1)
 - Life History Interview (Angrosino Chs. 2-4)
 - Observing a "Church-place" (Angrosino Ch. 1 & 7)
 - Visual/Virtual Ethnography (Angrosino Chs. 12-13)
 - Archival/Museum Analysis (Angrosino Chs. 5 & 6)
- Read *Poisonwood Bible*

- Prepare for "Ethnographic Seminar Project" (two birds, one stone?)
 - Use Angrosino as need be
- Prep "Chapter Seminar Presentations"
 - Sign-up for chapters in Engelke, Howell, and Rinkiewich

Summer 2019:

- June 10 — Introduction to Anthropology & Ethnographic Field Research
 "Doing Cultural Anthropology" Seminar Discussion
Read: Emerson Intro. + Chs. 1 & 5, Miner, "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema"
Seminar: Engelke Introduction & Conclusion // Rinkiewich Ch. 1
- June 11 — Ethnography and Representation
Read: Emerson Chs. 3-4, & 6
Seminar: Engelke Chs. 1 & 2 // Rinkiewich Chs. 2 & 3
- June 12 — Ethnography and Representation
Read: Emerson Chs. 8-9, Part II Intro., & 11
Seminar: Engelke Ch. 3 // Rinkiewich Chs. 4 & 5
- June 13 — Missionary Anthropology & Anthropology of Missions
Read: *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*, Chs. 1-2
Seminar: Rinkiewich Ch. 10 // Howell Chs. // *Poisonwood Bible*
- June 14 — Field Trip (?) and Thick Description Discussion
Read: Emerson Chs. 7, Part III Intro., 13, 15, & 16
- June 17 — Grounded Theory & Tricks of the Trade
 De-brief Field Trip
 Anthropological Analysis of Texts & Anthropological Writing
Read: "A Student's Guide to Reading and Writing in Social Anthropology"
Seminar: Engelke Chs. 5 & 6 // Rinkiewich Chs. 6 & 7
- June 18 — Virtual and Material Anthropology
Read: *Pious Fashion*, Introduction, "Latinx Muslims 'Like' One Another,"
 "Disciples of the New Digital Religions: Or, How to Make Your 'Fake' Religion Real," and *Muslim Cool*, Ch. 4, selections from *Objects of Devotion*. (Add'l articles, optional)
Seminar: Engelke Chs. 4 & 9 // Rinkiewich Chs. 8 & 9

- June 19 — Ethnographic Theology & Theology in Cultural Context
Read: “What’s Really Going on: Ethnographic Theology and the Production of Theological Knowledge,” “Roundtable on *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*: The Right to a Nonprojected Future,” “Sequela Comboni: Mission Anthropology in the Context of Empire,” “Editorial: The Urgent Need for a Theological Anthropology Today,” “Theology in Context: Music as a Test Case,” & “Dealing with Theology Culturally: A Response to Leopoldo A. Sanchez.”
Seminar: Engelke Chs. 7 & 8 // Rinkiewich Chs. 11-13
- June 20 — Project Presentations
- June 21 — Project Presentations

Assignments:

‘Doing Cultural Anthropology’ Assignments (each assignment is to be 3-5 pages): these assignments will help students to apply the ethnographic practices explored in class and reflect on the experience of doing cultural anthropology.

- **Thick Description** (3-5 pages): Students will turn in their notes to provide a thick description of a person, place, or thing. This will employ the principles of observation and thick description in readings such as Geertz, etc. This assignment will also include a reflection on the process.
- **Life History Interview** (3-5 pages): Students will choose one individual and conduct a life history interview with them. This assignment will be an interpretive overview of that individual’s life, context, and networks. This assignment will also include a reflection on the process.
- **Observing a Church-place** (3-5 pages): Students will observe a worship service of their choice (preferably of their own tradition) and provide an interpretive and thick description and analysis of the service, its participants, its material culture, etc. This assignment will also include a reflection on the process.
- **Visual/Virtual Ethnography** (3-5 pages): Students will either choose a visual artifact for analysis (a museum piece, a film, a piece of art, etc.) or conduct a short-term virtual-based ethnography. Students will write-

up what they discovered about the item/community through this practice and will also include a reflection on the process.

- **Field-trip (_____ as Cultural Space)** (3-5 pages): The class will go on a shared field-trip and write-up their observations from the experience. These observations will be shared and compared in class. The assignment will require a reflection on the field-trip experience and a comparison of the various notes and reflections of your fellow students and the instructor.

Chapter Seminar Presentations (5-10 minutes each): Students will lead students in a discussion of selected readings from the course reading assignments. Students will be required to do this three times during the course of the class (one each for Engelke, Howell, and Rinkiewich).

Anthropological Analysis of Pericope (2-3 pages): Students will choose a portion of Scripture and apply a cultural-anthropological lens to it. This assignment is meant to be an exercise in practice, but not necessarily an exegetical assignment for preaching and teaching. Students are encouraged to critically examine the text from the perspective of methodological agnosticism.

Poisonwood Bible Reading & Report (3-5 pages): Students will read Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* and provide a reflection on what they glean reading the literary piece from an anthropological perspective. This will include reflections on what this means for missiology in practice. It will also include a critical reflection on the novel itself.

Class Presentation of Ethnographic Project (10-12 minutes): Students will present the details, theoretical basis, and practice of their ethnographic seminar project to the class.

Ethnographic Seminar Project (16 – 20 pages): Students will design and execute their own ethnographic project.

Further details for each assignment will be discussed in class.

Selected Bibliography

Abdul Khabeer. 2016. *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion, and Hip Hop in the United States*. NYU Press.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2013. *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Harvard University Press.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

University of Minnesota Press.

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Chitwood, Ken. 2019. "Latinx Muslims 'Like' one another: an ethnographic exploration of social media and the formation of Latinx Muslim community," in *Anthropological Perspectives on Religion and Mobile Apps*, ed. Jacqueline Fewkes. Palgrave Macmillan.

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Geertz, Clifford. 1977. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books.

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- . 2015. "Distinguishing the Variables of Culture from the Constants of Theology: An Interview with anthropologist Dr. Jack Schultz," available at: <http://www.kenchitwood.com/blog/2015/5/21/distinguishing-the-variables-of-culture-from-the-constants-of-theology-an-interview-with-anthropologist-dr-jack-schultz>
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- Tweed, Thomas. 2008. *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion*. Harvard University Press.
- Vásquez, Manuel A. 2012. *More Than Belief: A Materialist Theory of Religion*. Oxford University Press.
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