

ANTH/INTL 103: Introduction to Anthropology

Virginia Commonwealth University, Fall 2021

Location: Canvas/Zoom

Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 7:00pm-8:15pm

Instructor: Adam Johnson

Email:

Office Hours: By appointment

This syllabus contains policies and expectations I have established for this course. Please read the entire syllabus carefully and refer to it regularly throughout the semester.

Course Description

This course is a general overview of the discipline of anthropology. The primary objective of this course is to provide you with tools and frameworks for thinking anthropologically. An anthropological lens can be brought to bear within any discipline that you might major in or career path that you choose. Thus, even if you do not intend to major in anthropology, an anthropological lens can enrich your chosen major and career.

We will approach the four sub-fields of anthropology (biological, cultural, archaeology, linguistics) by attending to various anthropological themes over the course of the semester and will explore the topics of evolutionary theory, human evolutionary history, human-environmental relations, kinship, cultural alterity, cultural change, and history.

The Instructor

There will be a section on Canvas for you to read a bit about me and we will have plenty of opportunities to talk throughout the semester. However, I want to be sure to communicate that I am in San Antonio, Texas and so am one hour behind you—class starts at 6pm for me. This should not affect the day-to-day function of the course.

I strive to respond to emails within 24 hours of receiving them, and most always much sooner. However, I am currently conducting research and may be in locations where I do not have access to the internet. This will never interfere with our class meetings but may delay my email responses.

I will post an announcement on Canvas anytime you should expect a longer-than-normal delay in email responses.

I am also very happy to meet with you throughout the semester, either to discuss course material, your performance, answer any questions you have, be support, or chat about more general topics. If you would like to meet, simply let me know and we will make it happen.

Required Materials

All the texts are available online through the VCU Library. I encourage you to take advantage of the benefits that your fees provide you and not buy physical or ebooks. However, you are welcome to purchase the books if you want to pad out your own personal library. Also note that

if you purchase the Cepek (2012) book, 100% of the profits from the sale go directly to Zábalo, the Cofán community at the center of the ethnography.

- [50 Great Myths of Human Evolution: Understanding Misconceptions About our Origins](#) by John Relethford
- [A Future for Amazonia: Randy Borman and Cofán Environmental Politics](#) by Michael Cepek
- [Animal Intimacies: Interspecies Relatedness in India's Central Himalayas](#) by Radhika Govindrajan
- [Vita: Life is a Zone of Social Abandonment](#) by João Biehl

Course Policies

In this class, you will read and engage with material each week. This includes chapters from the assigned texts as well as a few academic articles. The class will be divided into teams of 8-10 students each. Teams will serve as a peer group with which you can explore the material. Your own personal insights into the material will help further engage team members with the course material. Furthermore, team members will be additional support for times in which you struggle with or misunderstand course material.

Communication

I will primarily communicate general class information through the Announcement function in our Canvas course. There are generally emailed to you but sometimes are not (in my experience). Please make a habit of periodically checking ‘Announcements’ in Canvas to ensure that you have not missed any important information.

If I need to email you directly, I will do so through the Inbox function in Canvas. I encourage you to also use the Inbox function in Canvas for direct communication with me. I also encourage you to use the ‘Reply’ function on course announcements to ask questions or make comments. This keeps communication more organized and also help facilitate a classroom community.

Attendance

You are expected to attend all class periods over the course of the semester. I understand that things happen. As such, if you must miss a meeting, please communicate with me ahead of time so that I can help you get the most out of the course.

Students who consistently miss class may be withdrawn from the course by the instructor, resulting in a ‘W’ or an ‘F’ on your transcript. If you are unable to continue the course, you must withdraw by university designated deadline to avoid a possible ‘F’ in the class. Before withdrawing from classes, students should consult their instructor as well as other appropriate university offices. Withdrawing from classes may negatively impact a student’s financial aid award and his or her semester charges. To discuss financial aid and the student bill, visit the Student Services Center at 1015 Floyd Avenue (Harris Hall) and/or contact your financial aid counselor regarding the impact on your financial aid.

Zoom

We will hold our meetings on Zoom twice a week (usually) on Mondays and Wednesdays, from 7:00pm-8:15pm. As such it is important to practice good Zoom etiquette. Feel free to use the chat function to ask questions. However, avoid unrelated side-conversations during instruction. I also expect you to have your cameras on when possible. I understand that it is not always possible to have your camera on. However, you should make your best effort to be in a situation where you can keep your camera on. The reason that I ask this is because it really sucks teaching to a bunch of blank screens. The course will be much more engaging if we can see one another.

VCU Honor System

The VCU Honor System policy describes the responsibilities of students, faculty and administration in upholding academic integrity, while at the same time respecting the rights of individuals to the due process offered by administrative hearings and appeals. According to this policy, "Members of the academic community are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty, ethics and integrity at all times." In addition, "To support a commitment to the Honor System, all members of the VCU community are required to:

- Adhere to the Honor System policy and its procedures;
- Report any suspicion or knowledge of possible violations of the Honor System;
- Answer truthfully when called upon to do so regarding Honor System matters;
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality regarding related to Honor System matters."

More information can be found at in the VCU policy library (at <http://www.policy.vcu.edu/>).

Communication

It is your responsibility to check your email and Canvas. I will communicate class information through the Announcements function on Canvas. While these typically get forwarded to your personal email, I suggest that you regularly check the "Announcements" tab in Canvas. All personal/private communication will occur through the Canvas Inbox function.

Disabilities and Support

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended, require that VCU provide "academic adjustments" or "reasonable accommodations" to any student who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. To receive accommodations, students must register with the [Student Accessibility and Education Office](#) on the Monroe Park Campus (828-2253) or the [Division for Academic Success](#) on the MCV campus (828-9782).

The university recognizes that some students who previously did not need Section 504 Academic Accommodations, and who have a qualifying condition or disability, may need support or assistance during the return to campus process. A modified approach for the temporary and more permanent need for accommodation has been developed and implemented to provide students with full access to programs and activities related to their academic majors. Because every case is different, student requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Please share your need for an accommodation with the [Student Accessibility and Education Office](#), or for MCV Campus students, the [Division for Academic Success](#), after you have worked directly with your faculty member.

While the university provides support for specific circumstances, if you need further support, please let me know and we will figure it out together.

Religious Accommodations

For any required religious accommodations, please communicate with me so that we can develop a plan together.

Managing Stress

Students may experience situations or challenges that can interfere with learning and interpersonal functioning including stress, anxiety, depression, alcohol and/or other drug use, concern for a friend or family member, loss, sleep difficulties, feeling hopeless or relationship problems. There are numerous campus resources available to students including University Counseling Services which now has after-hours support (804-828-6200), University Student Health Services (804-828-8828) and the Wellness Resource Center (804-828-9355). 24-hour emergency mental health support is available by calling 804-828-6200 or utilizing the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-784-2433).

Health and Well-being During the Pandemic

All students should continue to WEAR MASKS AND MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCES. If an on-campus student identifies symptoms of COVID-19, has tested positive for COVID-19 or has come into contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, that student should contact [University Student Health Services](#). At that point, isolation should begin, and contact tracing will be performed by Student Health Services. Symptoms will be monitored, and the student should refer to a medical provider if symptoms worsen or be released from isolation after 14 days if symptom-free. Off-campus students should follow the same procedures with their local doctors.

Obviously, given that our class is through Zoom, you should only wear a mask if your physical circumstances require you to (e.g., you are in a coffee shop, the library).

Safety at VCU

Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts (<http://alert.vcu.edu/signup/index.php>)

Go to <http://www.alert.vcu.edu> for additional emergency information

Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (804-828-1234)

Report suspicious activities and objects.

It is important for students to know that all faculty members are mandated reporters of any incidents of sexual misconduct/violence (e.g., sexual assault, sexual exploitation and partner or relationship violence). This means that faculty cannot keep information about sexual misconduct/violence confidential if you share that information with them and they must report this information immediately to the university's Title IX Coordinator. In addition, department chairs, deans, and other unit administrators are required to report incidents of sex or gender-based discrimination to the university's Title IX Coordinator. Once a report is made, you will receive important information on your reporting options, on campus and off campus resources and remedial measures such as no-contact directives, residence modifications, and academic modifications. If you would prefer to speak with someone confidentially for support and to discuss your options for reporting, contact: VCU's Wellness Resource Center (804-828-9355;

myoptions@vcu.edu; thewell.vcu.edu), Greater Richmond Regional Hotline (804-612-6126, 24 hours a day), or VCU's Counseling Services (804-828-6200).

Grading Scheme

Reaction Statements (40%)

You will provide a reaction statement each week on Canvas concerned with the week's readings. These assignments are designed to provide you with the opportunity to critically engage with the readings. As such, you should bring the readings into conversation with your own knowledge, experiences, and thoughts. This activity will take place in two steps which I outline below:

- **Part I.** You should write at least 200 words reacting to your weekly readings. Reactions should not simply summarize the readings and should not be exhaustive. However, you must directly reference and cite specific material in the text that informs your reaction. Alongside your reactions statement, you must include at least one question that the readings have stimulated. Some potential things to think about: *how have the readings impacted your thinking on contemporary issues; what have you learned by reading the material; what are some key concepts or themes that are useful for your major, career, or life; how do the readings relate to other readings that you have completed*. These are merely suggestions so feel free to be creative and engage with the material on your terms.
 - You should complete your reaction statements by Wednesdays.
- **Part II.** You should respond to at least one team member. I hope that you feel inspired to not limit yourself to just one response post. I encourage you to engage with one another's ideas and carry on conversations that dig deeper into the themes of the course. However, I am only holding you responsible for one response post.
 - You should post your peer responses by Fridays.
- To receive full credit for this assignment, you must:
 - Read the assigned material for the week
 - Write at least 200 words reacting to the readings
 - Include at least one question after your reaction statement
 - Cite the associated readings where relevant
 - Respond to at least one team member

Self-Assessments (20 %)

You will complete three self-assessments over the course of the semester. These will ask you to think about the learning process by setting goals, evaluating your performance, and situating anthropology within your life and potential career. Each self-assessment will ask you to respond to a set of prompts that center the learning process. In addition to the three self-assessments, you will also ask you to compile a learning portfolio that provides samples of submissions that speak to specific prompts.

- To receive full credit for this assignment, you must:
 - Respond to each prompt

Doing Anthropology (40 %)

You will complete five activity assignments over the course of the semester. These assignments will ask you to practice some anthropological method or apply some concept.

- These will cover:
 - Natural selection
 - Trashcan archaeology
 - Visual ethnography
 - Animal behavior/ethology
 - Ethnographic interviewing
- To receive full credit for this assignment, you must:
 - Complete each part of the lab as directed

Course Schedule

PART I: Thinking About Our Evolution

- Week 1 (August 23): What is Anthropology and Human Ancestry
 - Read:
 - Rutherford: “What is anthropology?” – SAPIENS
 - Relethford: “Introduction”
 - Complete:
 - Week 1 Reaction Statement
 - Self-Assessment 1: Setting Goals
- Week 2 (August 30): Thinking About Evolutionary Theory
 - Read:
 - Relethford: “Ideas About Evolution”
 - Complete
 - Week 2 Reaction Statement
 - Natural Selection Lab
- Week 3 (September 6): Human Origins and Our Primate Cousins
 - Read:
 - Relethford: “Human Origins”
 - Complete
 - Week 3 Reaction Statement
- Week 4 (September 13) Genus *Homo*
 - Read:
 - Relethford: “Evolution of the Genus *Homo*”
 - Complete:
 - Week 4 Reaction Statement
 - Trashcan Archaeology

PART II: The Cofán People of Zábalo

- Week 5 (September 20): Ethnographic Methods and the Cofán
 - Read:

- Cepek: “Introduction: Cofán Possibilities”
 - Cepek: “Agency: The Emergence of an Intercultural Leader”
 - Complete:
 - Week 5 Reaction Statement
- Week 6 (September 27): About the Cofán
 - Read:
 - Cepek: “Identity: Collectivity and Difference”
 - Cepek “Value: The Dilemma of Being Cofán”
 - Complete:
 - Week 6 Reaction Statement
- Week 7 (October 4): Cofán Environmental Politics pt. 1
 - Read:
 - Cepek: “The NGO: Institutionalizing Activism”
 - Cepek: “The Forest: Collaborating with Science and Conservation”
 - Complete:
 - Week 7 Reaction Statement
 - Mid-term Self-Assessment
- Week 8 (October 11): Cofán Environmental Politics pt. 2
 - Read:
 - Cepek: “The School in the City: Producing the Cofán of the Future”
 - Cepek: “Conclusion: A Possible Forest”
 - Complete:
 - Week 8 Reaction Statement
 - Mini Visual Ethnography

PART III: Living with Others

- Week 9 (October 18): Animal Intimacies pt. 1
 - Read:
 - Govindrajan: “Introduction”
 - Govindrajan: “The Goat Who Died for Family: Sacrificial Ethics and Kinship”
 - Complete:
 - Week 9 Reaction Statement
- Week 10 (October 25): Animal Intimacies pt. 2
 - Read:
 - Govindrajan: “Outsider Monkey, Insider Monkey: On the Politics of Exclusion and Belonging”
 - Govindrajan: “Pig Gone Wild: Colonialism, Conservation, and the Otherwild”
 - Complete:
 - Week 10 Reaction Statement
 - Mini Animal Behavioral Study

PART IV: Putting it All Together

- Week 11 (November 1): Vita
 - Read:
 - Biehl: “Introduction”
 - Biehl: “A Zone of Social Abandonment”
 - Biehl: “Brazil”
 - Biehl: “Citizenship”
 - Complete:
 - Week 11 Reaction Statement
- Week 12 (November 8): Catarina and the Alphabet
 - Read (It’s not as much as it looks. I promise!):
 - Biehl: “Life of the Mind”
 - Biehl: “Society of Bodies”
 - Biehl: “Inequality”
 - Biehl: “Ex-Human”
 - Biehl: “The House and the Animal”
 - Biehl: “Love is the Illusion of the Abandoned”
 - Biehl: “Social Psychosis”
 - Biehl: “An Illness of Time”
 - Biehl: “God, Sex, and Agency”
 - Complete:
 - Week 12 Reaction Statement
- Week 13 (November 15): The Medical Archive
 - Read (It’s not as much as it looks. I promise!):
 - Biehl: “Public Psychiatry”
 - Biehl: “Her Life as a Typical Patient”
 - Biehl: “Democratization and the Right to Health”
 - Biehl: “Economic Change and Mental Suffering”
 - Biehl: “Medical Science”
 - Biehl: “End of a Life”
 - Biehl: “Voices”
 - Biehl: “Care and Exclusion”
 - Biehl: “Migration and Model Policies”
 - Biehl: “Women, Poverty, and Social Death”
 - Biehl: “I am Like this Because of Life”
 - Biehl: “The Sense of Symptoms”
 - Biehl: “Pharmaceutical Being”
 - Complete:
 - Week 13 Reaction Statement
- Week 14 (November 29): Biology and Ethics
 - Read:
 - Biehl: “Pain”

- Biehl: “Human Rights”
 - Biehl: “Value Systems”
 - Biehl: “Gene Expression and Social Abandonment”
 - Biehl: “Family Tree”
 - Biehl: “A Genetic Population”
 - Biehl: “A Lost Chance”
 - Biehl: “Conclusion”
- Complete:
 - Week 13 Reaction Statement
- Week 15 (December 6): Open Swim
 - Complete:
 - Final Self-Assessment
- Finals Week (December 13): Wrapping up the Semester
 - Mini Ethnography