

TROPICS AND TROPICAL CULTURE  
ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE GLOBAL SOUTH  
ANT-4930/6930: Fall 2018

Instructor: Dr. Michael Heckenberger

Time/Location: T: 4 (10:40-11:30); TH: 4-5 (10:40-12:35), Turlington 1208A

Office Hours (Turlington B360): T: 10-10:40; 11:30-12:30); TH: 9:30-10:30

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Summary:

Tropics and Tropical Culture takes a critical look at the anthropology of three major tropical regions, the Pacific, Africa and the Amazon. It provides a brief survey of cultures in these areas, paying particular attention to how tropical forest and tropical island peoples have been portrayed in Western characterizations. It critically evaluates the characterization of tropical peoples as primitive, environmentally limited, and generally backwards, in comparison to the cultures of temperate and sub-tropical regions, a viewpoint that has been characterized as “tropicality.” This view of view of the tropics begins with Aristotles’ suggestion that the tropics, the “torrid zone,” was uninhabitable or only inhabitable by the most savages of races, and follows how tropical peoples have been portrayed, in print and film, as primordial and uncivilized through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Anthropological studies are used to help deconstruct this bias and reveal the richness and diversity tropical cultures, and the places where they live.

The class will develop discussion on contemporary issues, such as (1) climate change and ecological degradation, in tropical forest areas particularly; (2) poverty among indigenous and other traditional peoples in rural areas and urban poor, including physical deprivation and lack of voice or power in political-economic arenas worldwide; (3) warfare, violence and crime in the Global South.

Anticipated Outcomes:

This is a concept class. Through the lens of anthropological work, including archaeology biological and indigenous history, and examples from living cultures studied by socio-cultural anthropologists, the student will gain a rudimentary understanding of the human history and developments of non-Western (European) peoples in these areas. They are uniquely understood through anthropological techniques, due their position at the margins of the world’s major pre-modern empires, classical civilizations, and the areas that can dominate with rise of Western Europe. The lack of robust historical records and written language (the land of prehistory) has occluded these histories until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, and until recently it was assumed that little changed in tropical regions (they were backwards in terms of human cultural and technological innovations). but it is possible to suggest an antiquity and variability, including diffuse, non-centralized (state) social and political institutions that are comparable in numbers of people, sophisticated systems of planning and land use and regional integration.

The parallel aim is to aid students develop a critical eye for how human diversity is often misrepresented or misunderstood through time making the job or mission of the anthropologist two-fold: (1) understanding human socio-cultural and biological variation across time and space; and (2) given this focus, it provides a critical lens for understanding and addressing political-economic and social inequality.

Selections from Following Books are required:

J. Vansina (1990), *Paths through the Rainforest*, Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press

P. Kirch (2005), *On the Road of the Winds*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press

L. Rabben (2004), *Brazil's Indians and the Onslaught of Civilizations* (formerly *Unnatural Selection*), Washington: Smithsonian

Additional required readings for some weeks will be placed on a course Canvas page folder, including all readings from primary books and articles. Additional current events and other topics will be sent as online links via e-mail.

Weekly Outline:

Week 1:

TH: 8/23. Introduction (online materials, including Declaration of Belém)

Week 2: Tropical Civilizations

T: 8/28. Orientalism & Civilization (Read; Heckenberger, Scientific American 2009; Practicing Anthropology 2004);

TH: 8/30. Film: The Lost City of Z (Paramount 2017);

Week 3: Pacific

T: 9/4. Darwin, Cook and MacArthur: Geography & Austronesians (read Kirch)

TH: 9/6. Southern Asia (Read Geertz, Negara chapters, 1980)

Week 4: Pacific/SE Asia

T: 9/11. Film: First Contact or The Navigators (**first commentary due**)

TH: 9/13. Polynesian Kingdoms

Week 5: Africa

T: 9/18. Africa: Colonialism, Geography and HDI

TH: 9/20. Africa & Early Bantu (begin Vansina readings)

Week 6: Africa

T: 9/25. Late Bantu & Bantu Kingdoms (Ichumbaki online)

TH: 9/27. Human Development across the Globe: John Krigbaum

Week 7: Africa

T: 10/2. Film: African Civilization

TH: 10/4. Kush Kingdoms, Aksum & Horn (Steve Brandt; Kristen) (**second commentary due**)

Week 8: Africa

T: 10/9. West African Kingdoms and Colonialism (read Schmidt; Baba)

TH: 10/11. Scramble for Africa and Diaspora

Week 9: Amazon

T: 10/16. Film: Ghosts of Rwanda

TH: 10/18. The Neo-tropics

Week 10: Amazon

T: 10/23. The Caribbean & Atlantic Imperialism

TH: 10/25. Amazonian Prehistory & History (read [Heckenberger articles](#))

Week 11: Amazon

T: 10/30. Arawak/Tupi-Guarani Diaspora & Southern Amazon

TH: 11/1. Film: Lost Cities of the Amazon (Nat Geo 2018)

Week 12: Amazon

T: 11/6. Xingu Indigenous History (Schwartzman et al. 2013; and Heckenberger 2014)

TH: 11/8. Xingu Today (Rabben chapters)

Week 13: Amazon

T: 11/13. Kayapo (read Zanotti chapters)

TH: 11/15. Yanomamo

Week 14: Amazon

T: 11/20. Tupi-Guarani, Carib, and Jivaro ([Third Commentary due](#))

TH: 11/22. No class (Thanksgiving)

Week 15: Tropics in the Global Systems

T: 11/27. Bio-cultural Diversity and Conservation (Lovejoy and Nobres 2018)

TH: 12/29. Global Concerns: Climate, Development and Human Rights

Week 16:

T: 12/4. Review & Conclusions

Evaluation:

Evaluation will be based on:

- (1) Three 500-word commentaries. Commentaries (worth 25% of grade) will be graded on a scale of high (full 10%), medium (7.5 of 10%), low (5 of 10%) quality (0 points will be given only for materials not submitted); These are designed like a **statement of purpose** for your project, starting with an introduction of place or topic (first commentary), then the method or conceptual angle that you propose to develop (second commentary) and finally the relevance of this to contemporary themes (third commentary).
- (2) Five 200-word opinion pieces will be submitted for each of the films (these are due via e-mail to out list serve by the following week); these opinions on films are worth 10% of grade (2 points each; but not graded);
- (3) Ten summary statement (one to two sentence) and comment/question (one sentence) for all readings. Summaries are worth 25% of grade (3 points each). These will be due the day the readings appear in outline, as they are designed to stimulate discussion of the materials. Do the readings!
- (4) Final power-point project and presentation, to be developed and submitted for comment in several steps throughout semester (40% of grade).
- (5) Graduate students have two additional requirements but are not required to submit three 50-word commentaries (#1 above): (1) develop a specialized annotated bibliography with instructor (10-15 entries) and (2) submitted a 20

page research paper (excluding bibliography), in manuscript style of journal selected by student.

Please note that there are new policies for calculating grade point averages. See <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html> for details. Also note that a grade of C- does not count for credit in major, minor, Gen Ed, Gordon Rule, or college basic distribution credit (for further information regarding minus grades go to: <http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>).

Additional Items:

Academic Honesty, Student Responsibilities, Student Conduct Code: Students are required to do their own work on exams. The penalty for cheating is to receive no points for that exam and the incident will be reported to the Student Honor Court. The student is responsible to review the UF Student Responsibilities Guidelines, available online.

Students with Disabilities: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who then must provide this documentation to the instructor.