

TROPICS AND TROPICAL CULTURE
ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE GLOBAL SOUTH
ANT-4930: 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 20th 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 20th 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

Week 2: Tropical Civilizations

T: 8/28. Overview of Contemporary Issues (Read; Heckenberger, *Scientific American* 2009; *Practicing Anthropology* 2004);

TH: 8/30. Film: *Lost Cities of the Amazon* (Nat Geo);

Week 3: Amazon

T: 9/4. *Indigenous Peoples and Poverty* (Declaration of Belém; UN Charter)

TH: 9/6. *Amazonian Prehistory & History* (Heckenberger and Neves, 2009)

Week 4: Amazon (statement/commentary part 1 due)

T: 9/11. *Roots of Global Poverty: The Caribbean & Atlantic Imperialism* (Rabben reading 1)

TH: 9/13. *Xingu Indigenous History* (Schwartzman et al. 2013; and Heckenberger 2014)

Week 5: Amazon

T: 9/18. Film: *Heat* (on gender, indigenous peoples and climate in the Amazon)

TH: 9/20. *The Xingu Today* (Rabben readings 2-3)

Week 6: Africa

T: 9/25. *Colonialism, Globalization and HDI* (Homi Bhabha, 1994, *The Location of Culture*, two chapters)

- TH: 9/27. Bantu & Bantu Kingdoms (Vansina readings 1-2)
- Week 7: Africa
T: 10/2. Human Development: The Tropics (Vansina readings 3)
TH: 10/4. Film: Ghosts of Rwanda & Ichumbaki videos
- Week 8: Africa (statement/commentary part 2 due)
T: 10/9. Individual projects introduction (5-10 minutes each).
TH: 10/11. Scramble for Africa and Diaspora (read Schmidt 2017)
- Week 9: Pacific
T: 10/16. Darwin, Cook and MacArthur: Geography & Austronesians
TH: 10/18. Southern Asia (Geertz, *Negara*, 1980, two chapters)
- Week 10: Pacific/SE Asia
T: 10/23. Film: First Contact or The Navigators
TH: 10/25. Polynesian Kingdoms (Kirch reading 1-2)
- Week 11: Overview
T: 10/30. Selected video/online & discussion, based on student projects
TH: 11/1. Tristes Tropics or “World on the Wane” (Lurhman, 2018)
- Week 12: Brazilian Urban Violence (statement/commentary part 3 due)
T: 11/6. Selected video/online & discussion, based on student projects
TH: 11/8. São Paulo (Heckenberger 2012)
- Week 13: Climate & Sustainability
T: 11/13. Bio-cultural Diversity and Conservation (Lovejoy and Nobres 2018; Nepstad et al. 2006; tba)
TH: 11/15. Climate, Development and Human Rights in the Global South (Mac Chapin, 2005, tba)
- Week 14: Indigenous Rights and Poverty
T: 11/20. Student Projects
TH: 11/22. No Class
- Week 15: War, Crime and Violence
T: 11/27. Student projects
TH: 11/29. The History of Poverty, Violence and War in the Global South (Biehl 2006)
- 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). Due dates for 3-part research statement commentaries are by weeks 4, 8 and 12

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) Short 150 to 250-word summaries of four films and one additional summary related to two class sections devoted to online materials (weeks 11-12) tied to specific student interests during are due the week following their viewing. These opinions on films are worth 10% of grade (2 points each; but not graded).
- (3) Ten summary statements (one to two sentence) and comment/questions (one sentence) for 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. The summaries (2-3 sentences) for 10 readings correspond to underlined above and are scheduled to begin week 4 (the selections from Rabben, Vansina and Kirch books do not require summaries)
- (4) Final power-point project and presentation, to be developed and submitted for comment in several steps throughout semester (40% of grade). Student presentations of powerpoint projects (10-15 minutes), including text from above and graphics, will be conducted weeks 14 and 15, and final submitted by the end of exam period.

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.