

*Social Anthropology: Canadian Perspectives on Culture and
Society*

By Edward Hedican

Instructor's Manual

CSPI, 2013

Social Anthropology: Canadian Perspectives on Culture and Society

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Chapter 1: The Scope of Anthropology

Suggested In-class Activities

1. Fields of Anthropology

Divide class into groups; assign each group one field or sub-field of anthropology. As a group, students should develop a one-sentence definition for their assigned field and provide an example to illustrate the type of research conducted in that field. As well, ask students to list 2–3 central methods of their assigned subfield. Each group should then share their responses with the class.

2. Cultural Relativism

Part One:

Have students read the following article in class or as homework prior to class:

Miner, Horace (1956) Body Ritual among the Nacirema. *American Anthropologist* 58(3): 503–507.

Part Two:

Divide students into small groups where they should identify what specific behaviours or priorities about the Nacirema strike them as “irrational,” “distasteful,” “impractical,” or “outrageous.” Ask students to reflect on why they felt that way. Have groups share the key points of their discussion with the class.

Part Three:

Next, reveal to students that *Nacirema* is *American* backwards, and that the article is actually focused on American culture.

Review the article again as a class, and discuss what is actually being described by the author.

Part Four:

For homework, ask students to develop a 2–3 page report in the style of Miner where they 1. Unpack a daily routine or habit that many Canadians engage in, taking the perspective of an outsider as Miner did in his article, and 2. Reflect on the concept of cultural relativism, discussing why anthropologists have adopted this concept and how it has shaped the discipline.

3. The Relativist Dilemma

Part One:

Have students read through Box 1.4 and the article below:

Boddy, Janice (2007). Clash of Selves: Gender, Personhood, and Human Rights Discourse in Colonial Sudan. *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 41(3): 402-426.

Part Two:

Open a class discussion. Ask students to consider the parallels between female genital mutilation (something that harms women but is a prerequisite to social mobility in much of the Sudan) and bodily harms that Western women accept in exchange for social status and mobility (e.g., dieting, hair removal, application of cosmetics, wearing of constrictive shoes), which many of us believe are normal and rational. The aim of this discussion is to underscore Hedican's point about the need for anthropologists to monitor themselves for ethnocentric attitudes.

4. Ethics in Anthropology

Part One:

Divide students into small groups. Provide each group with one or two of the case studies found in either in *The Handbook on Ethical Issues in Anthropology* (Cassell, J. and Jacoms, S., editors) (<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/toc.htm>) or from the Smithsonian Institution website (http://anthropology.si.edu/outreach/Teaching_Activities/edethica.html).

Part Two:

In their groups, students should discuss the various dilemmas presented, and attempt to develop solutions. Regroup as a class to discuss each case study in turn, and provide students with the solutions used by the real anthropologists (also found on the websites above).

Suggested Assignments

1. Critical Thinking Essays

Provide students with a statement or question that relates to each chapter's subject matter. Ask students to spend 10–15 minutes writing a response essay.

Chapter One Sample Topics:

- Discuss the ways in which the origins of anthropology are rooted in curiosity.

- Can you identify areas of intersection or overlap between any of the main fields of anthropology described in Chapter 1 of your text? If so, in what ways do they overlap? If not, why not?
- Compare and contrast descriptive linguistics with historical linguistics.
- Define *acculturation* and provide an example.
- Define *ethnocentrism* and provide an historical example that illustrates this concept.
- In 1–2 paragraphs, describe the similarities and differences between the terms “culture,” “society,” and “nation.”

2. Take-home Assignments

- A. Find a recent news article that relates to one of the fields of anthropology described in Chapter 1. Write a one-page report summarizing the article, outlining what field(s) it relates to, and expanding on how and why you chose it as an example.
- B. Find five different definitions of the *concept of culture* from books, journal articles, or other peer-reviewed sources (NOT the internet). List each definition and, in one paragraph, discuss why you think there is such variation.
- C. Consider how and why research subjects’ “consent” can be “informed” to varying degrees, and is not necessarily a black-and-white quality. What are some factors that can enhance, diminish, compromise, or otherwise modulate a participant’s capacity to consent? Write a journal entry from the perspective of a member of a community that has historically been shortchanged by legalistic agreements or contracts with Westerners.
- D. Ethnographic Observation I (courtesy of Tad McIlwraith): Ask students to spend 15 minutes observing a “cultural scene” (a public place with people in it) of their choice. If you intend on assigning the second part of this assignment (see below), ensure that you inform students that they must choose a scene that they can return to again. Once completed, students write a three page description of 1) what they did; 2) what they saw; and 3) a conclusion about the human behavior they witnessed during the 15 minutes period. This paper is a presentation of data collected. See below for rubric:

Ethnographic Observation Exercise I by Tad McIlwraith

Introduction

This assignment is designed to give you the opportunity to make observations of a ‘cultural scene’ as an anthropologist would and to try out a key method of anthropological research for yourself. You will be required to write a short description of your chosen scene and then to make a comment on those observations. This assignment also provides you with some of the materials you will require for completing your essay assignment, due later in the term.

Recommended Process: Summary

1. Choose a cultural scene, one which has some human activity (see below). This process will be discussed in class. Keep in mind that you will have to repeat the observations of this scene for your essay later in the term.
2. Observe your scene for 15 minutes and no more.
3. Make short notes as you observe your scene, or, if making notes is impossible during your observation, make short, point form notes immediately after your observation is over.
4. Fill out your notes once as soon as possible after your observation is done.
5. Complete a short write-up of 3 pages. Your write-up will describe the scene and make a comment about it.

Recommended Process: Detailed Instructions

1. Choosing a Cultural Scene

Choose a scene that is contained in a small area and has a definite focus of human activity. These scenes need not be fancy or complicated ... you will get enough information for the write-up while watching just about any activity.

It is suggested that you choose a scene that you are not directly involved in, OR, do not know much about. Choosing an unfamiliar scene will make this assignment easier for you. Typically, the people who do poorly on this assignment observe the place that they work because work places are too familiar to people and they make assumptions about what they have seen.

Examples of Possible Ethnographic Scenes

- The coming and going of shoppers in a mall
- Getting on and riding the bus
- Buying coffee at a coffee shop
- Crossing at a cross-walk

Examples of Difficult or Challenging Ethnographic Scenes

- A family party or party with friends: This would be difficult because as a primary participant, you will find it very hard to sit back and observe what is going on around you.
- Scenes discovered while traveling: It will be hard to return to do a similar observation again.

- The place that you work: Almost always, you cannot put aside what you already know about the scene. This results in conclusions about the scene that are not based on observations you made during your 15 minute time period.

2. Observation

Observe your scene discreetly for about 15 minutes. In many cases, the easiest way to do this is to find a place to sit quietly and then to simply watch what is going on. Please do not talk to people or interview people during this time.

3. Note taking

Take notes in a small notebook. If it is possible to make notes during your observation, do so, but do not find yourself so focused on taking notes that you do not watch what is going on. Your notes should include:

- Information about the scene itself – who is there, lighting, physical description, etc.
- Information about what you saw people doing

4. Filling out your notes

When your fifteen minutes are up, leave the scene. In a quiet place, fill out your notes. Be sure to include more details about the topics above. At this time, you should start to think about themes, patterns, or conclusions in what you saw.

Note: This step is critical. Not only is it a key component of any anthropologist's activities, you will need to use these notes later in the term when you do your second observation. If the notes of your original observation are poor, it will be difficult for you to compare your second observation with this first observation.

5. Write-up and Submissions

In your write-up, you should discuss the following things and your papers will be graded based on this list:

- What you did. This may be a simple statement of where you went, how you set up to do your observation, and perhaps why you made those decisions.
- A general description of the scene. These are taken from your notes and should give me enough to understand what you were seeing.
- What you saw people doing. These are taken from your notes as well. This is the heart of your description and should provide me with the details of how the people you saw were involved in the scene you were observing.
- A general conclusion about what you saw. This conclusion might be as simple as a detailed comment on the activity like something you never realized about the scene you observed. This requirement is key for a good grade, as this exercise is about

observing a scene and commenting on it. It is more than just description. Keep in mind, however, that your comment does not have to be earth shattering ... it may be fairly straightforward and mundane while still moving your paper from observation and description towards analysis.

- You will need to make decisions about how much to share what is important about your scene. It may not all be important.

E. Ethnographic Observation II (courtesy of Tad McIlwraith): The students return to the same cultural scene and observe again for 15 minutes. This time, the write-up is slightly longer. The write-up includes: 1) a short summary of what was done during the two observations; 2) a description of the similarities and differences between the two observations; 3) the introduction of two concepts from cultural anthropology (ie definitions in the student's words) that can help explain or understand what was seen; and 4) the application of the two concepts to the observations where the student explains how the concepts apply to the observations and conclusions made.

Suggested Films

| Title | Description |
|---|--|
| Warriors of the Amazon (Nova) | Follows a film crew documenting a group of Yanomami people, explores the relationship between the group and a nearby group and some of the influences that threaten their lives. |
| The Ax Fight | Analysis by Chagnon and Asch of a fight in a Yanomamö Indian village. Includes a discussion of the kinship structure of the fight. |
| Anthropology on Trial (Time-Life Video, 1984) | Explores anthropology from the point of view of those who have been studied, highlighting the people's reactions to the anthropologist's conclusions about their culture. |
| Everybody's Ethnic | Allows viewers to discover themselves by exploring other cultures. |
| Cannibal Tours | Follows a number of European and American ecotourists as they travel in Papua New Guinea. An example of ethnocentrism. |

Other Suggested Resources

- Chagnon, Napoleon (1992). *Yanomamö: The Last Days of Eden*. New York: Harcourt.
- American Anthropology Association: What is Anthropology?
<http://www.aaanet.org/about/whatisanthropology.cfm>

- Government of Canada's Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (<http://www.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>).
- Clifford Geertz's review of *Darkness in El Dorado*, a 2000 book on Chagnon's possible role in causing a measles epidemic among the Yanomami: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2001/feb/08/life-among-anthros/>
- A recent *New York Times* article on the various controversies swirling around Chagnon: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/17/magazine/napoleon-chagnon-americas-most-controversial-anthropologist.html?pagewanted=all& r=0>,

TEST BANK

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Chapter 1: The Scope of Anthropology

Multiple Choice

1. Which reason of the following might account for human's tremendous success adapting to planet Earth's environment?
 - a. Our tremendous eyesight.
 - b. **Our curiosity.**
 - c. Our complex teeth.
 - d. Our physical strength.
2. Which group of ancient humans are often credited with originating anthropology?
 - a. The Romans.
 - b. The Mesopotamians.
 - c. The Egyptians.
 - d. **The Greeks.**
3. Human paleontologists or paleoanthropologists are interested in which of the following?
 - a. The behaviour of nonhuman primates.
 - b. The physical environments that humans have lived in.
 - c. **Human fossils and the stages of human evolution.**
 - d. Sequencing the human genome.
4. The biological anthropologists that study primates are referred to as.
 - a. **Primatologists.**
 - b. Medical anthropologists.
 - c. Ethnologists.
 - d. Ethnobiologists.
5. Eموke Szathmary is a medical anthropologist that has contributed to the health of Canada's aboriginal peoples through her research on.
 - a. Alcoholism.
 - b. **Type 2 diabetes.**

- c. Obesity.
 - d. Heart disease.
6. Of the physical characteristics that contributed to human evolutionary development which of the following do we share with other primates?
- a. Sharp canine incisors and short arms.
 - b. A very keen sense of smell and complex tastebuds.
 - c. **Stereoscopic vision and grasping hands.**
 - d. The larynx and tongue capable of making the sounds of speech.
7. The medical anthropology study of immigrant Greek women in Montréal concluded what about mental health issues?
- a. The mental health of immigrants can only be understood by other immigrants of the same culture.
 - b. **Mental health issues need to be placed in a social context in order to fully understand them.**
 - c. Their illness was related to unsafe workplace conditions.
 - d. Greeks are particularly sensitive to social isolation.
8. Which of the following options best defines the meaning of applied anthropology?
- a. Anthropology which provides an economic benefit.
 - b. Anthropology which is aimed at improving another culture.
 - c. **The application of anthropological knowledge to the understanding and possible solutions to various human problems.**
 - d. The application of anthropological knowledge to expand universal human rights.
9. Which of the anthropological sub disciplines deals with reconstructing an understanding of physical and social aspects of past cultures?
- a. **Archaeology.**
 - b. Ethnography.
 - c. Forensic anthropology.
 - d. Physical anthropology.
10. What are the two major areas of anthropological linguistics?

- a. Phonetic linguistics and descriptive linguistics.
 - b. Ethno linguistics and grammatical linguistics.
 - c. Descriptive linguistics and historical linguistics.**
 - d. Glottochronology and morphology.
11. What do you think is the most important aspect of linguistics to an anthropologist wanting to document a little known culture?
- a. Learning the linguistic technique to read an unknown language.
 - b. Learning how to teach people your own language to facilitate communication.
 - c. Learning how to decipher the history of the other people's languages.
 - d. Learning how to speak an unknown and unwritten language.**
12. How can we best understand the term socio-cultural anthropology?
- a. Canadian anthropologists adopted the term from American anthropologists.
 - b. Canadian anthropologists adopted the term from British anthropologists.
 - c. Canadian anthropologists combined the British and American preferred terms for this type of anthropology.**
 - d. It refers to a unique type of anthropology discovered in Canada.
13. Collecting the information to use to describe peoples culture is known as what?
- a. Ethnology.
 - b. Ethnography.**
 - c. Social quantitative research.
 - d. Culturology
14. The practice of comparing characteristics of culture between cultures is generally known as.
- a. Ethnology.**
 - b. Ethnography.
 - c. Comparative description.
 - d. Deductive research.
15. Which three of the following best represent characteristics of culture?
- a. Culture is innate, programmed and adaptive.
 - b. Culture is learned, holistic and assimilated.

- c. Culture is encoded, borrowed and static.
 - d. Culture is learned, adaptive and changing.**
16. In the past powerful cultures have tried to force change upon others using a process known as what?
- a. Diffusion.
 - b. Assimilation.**
 - c. Ethnocentrism.
 - d. Cultural relativism.
17. Which phrase best characterizes the difference between ethnocentrism and cultural relativism?
- a. Ethnocentric people sympathize with the problems of cultural relativists.
 - b. Cultural relativists seek to dominate the ethnocentric.
 - c. Ethnocentric people think they are culturally superior while cultural relativists value all cultures.**
 - d. Cultural relativists will not defend themselves against the superiority of ethnocentric people.
18. Which phrase best characterizes the relationship between a culture and a society?
- a. Elements of culture are portable while society is fixed to a place.**
 - b. Elements of society are portable well culture is fixed to a place.
 - c. Neither society nor culture are portable but are fixed to a place.
 - d. Both society and culture are portable and independent of place.
19. Which of the following ethical considerations is the **primary** concern of anthropologists necessary to avoid harming the people they study?
- a. The obtaining of federal funding to do the work.
 - b. The obtaining of the informed consent of the people being studied.**
 - c. Ensuring that each individual gets paid well for sharing information.
 - d. Ensuring that each individual gets publication credit.
20. Which of the following best explains Canada's multicultural society approach?
- a. A desire to recognize all immigrants since Canada was confederated.

- b. A desire to keep the peace between the French and British founding populations.
- c. **A desire to recognize the special rights of the three founding peoples, aboriginal, French and English as well as newer immigrants.**
- d. The desire to reflect the ethnic diversity of the global population.

True or False

1. Curiosity is a human quality that is one of the main reasons for the success of humans as a species. **Answer: T**
2. Biological or physical anthropologists have helped Canadian First Nations people understand the causes of diabetes among their southernmost populations. **Answer: T**
3. Medical anthropologists are doctors that have anthropological training so they can practice clinical medicine in underdeveloped countries. **Answer: F**
4. Applied anthropology is concerned with the application of anthropological knowledge to various human problems. **Answer: T**
5. Archaeologists are not really considered anthropologists because they only deal with past cultures. **Answer: F**
6. The use of the term cultural anthropology has its roots in Britain. **Answer: F**
7. Ethnographic research generally uses the inductive method. **Answer: T**
8. The majority of cultural characteristics are passed on through physical or genetic processes. **Answer: F**
9. Assimilation refers to the intentional process of converting people from one culture to another. **Answer: T**
10. Cultural relativism is the process whereby we determine which aspects of other people's cultures display acceptable behaviour. **Answer: F**

Short Answer

1. Provide a brief example of a concrete problem that applied anthropology might be helpful in resolving. **(Page: 7–8)**
2. Briefly explain why an anthropologist should master the language of people being researched. **(Page: 7–10)**
3. Briefly explain how Canadian anthropologists have ended up using the term socio–cultural anthropology instead of just social or cultural. **(Page: 10)**
4. Explain briefly how ethnology differs from ethnography. **(Page: 10)**
5. What do anthropologists mean when they say culture is adaptive? Explain briefly. **(Page: 16)**
6. Compare and contrast the meaning of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. **(Page: 14–17)**
7. Culture is something portable, society is something fixed. Briefly explain the difference. **Page: 14–17**
8. Briefly explain why the concept of cultural relativism may have practical limits for most people, including anthropologists. **Page: 17–20**
9. Briefly explain why Canadian anthropologists tend to be concerned with the notion of multiculturalism. **Page: 20–22**
10. Briefly explain some of the reasons why anthropologists must pay attention to research ethics. **Page: 22–25**

Discussion/Essay Questions

1. An interest in anthropology seems to have come along with the age of Enlightenment and voyages of discovery. Discuss some of the factors that made

- the idea of anthropology increasingly important between 1500 and 1900. **(Pages: 1–4)**
2. Using examples from the book, explain the scope and interests of biological or physical anthropology. **(Pages: 4–7)**
 3. Using examples from the book, discuss how medical anthropology may be used to help people. **(Pages: 4–6)**
 4. Discuss the role that the author played as an applied anthropologist and intermediary between White Sand First Nation and the Department of Indian Affairs. **(Pages: 7)**
 5. Discuss some of the common links between the four subfields of anthropology. **(Pages: 1–10)**
 6. Explain how the research stage called fieldwork helps anthropologists gain the information they need to understand another culture. **(Pages: 10)**
 7. Outline the main characteristics of the concept of culture as anthropologists see it. **(Pages: 11–17)**
 8. Provide some concrete examples of how ethnocentrism causes problems among humans. **(Pages: 14–17)**
 9. Debate the reasons for and against Westerners intervening in the practice of female genital mutilation. (Pages: 18)
 10. Discuss some of the positive and negative outcomes of multiculturalism in Canada. **(Pages: 20–22)**