

Sept. 9, 2009

1 INTRODUCTION TO COURSE

I. Housekeeping

A. Send around piece of paper; each of you should include:

name
e-mail
year
major
previous anthropology or sociology courses?
why taking the course?

B. Books

1. Available at the Coop; they are required

C. The 2005 version of the course is available at OpenCourseWare site

1. This year's version will not be the same, but looking over these materials will give you an idea of what's covered

D. Misc.

1. Lectures will be posted after being presented on the class website

2. All readings will be posted

a. Some work remains at the website, but for the most part it's ready

3. So will supplemental readings, usually from the mass media; many are already there

a. If newspaper articles are posted for a particular class, they are optional reading—only the scholarly pieces are required

b. Keep the supplemental readings in mind when you're deciding on a paper topic

4. There are some mistakes on the syllabus, nothing serious

II. Nature of course

A. CI-H course

1. Improve communication skills, especially writing
 - a. The syllabus contains the specifics of the CI-H component of the course

B. Course requirements

1. No prerequisites
2. Strong discussion component
 - a. Basic format is 1 hour lecture, ½ discussion
 - b. Lectures themselves are very interactive
 - c. Study questions on the readings will be posted at the website
 - 1) You'll be asked to answer these in class at random
 - d. Students will be asked to bring discussion questions
 - e. Students will be asked to work in groups and present your findings
 - f. The forum at the website allows us to read one another's Reader Responses
3. Written assignments are fairly easy
4. Reading
 - a. As it says on the syllabus, you *must* do the reading
 - b. **Reader responses**
 - 1) Consisting of *a few sentences, a paragraph*, nothing you can't do in 5 minutes, after doing the readings
 - 2) I've found these to be quite useful: students come much more prepared to discuss the reading
 - 3) They must be **reactions** to the reading—not about the lectures, not your random thoughts about ethnicity
 - a) Not a synopsis of the reading

- 4) Reader Responses can be about any of the reading for that week
- 5) They're not graded
 - a) They *are* required
- 6) All of this is covered on the syllabus
- 7) Should be posted on the website in the "Forum" section
 - a) You can react to one another's postings
- 8) First one is due next week, Mon. or Wed.

C. We will see five video/DVDs

III. Intellectual Thrust of Course

- A. Ethnic identity: we'll begin with a short overview (Eriksen) on ethnicity
 1. And begin Gladney—an easy book
 2. And begin Nagel
 3. Note that some reading of a more theoretical, introductory nature will come later
 4. The syllabus may look like too much reading; it isn't
 5. Vast majority of readings are ethnography-based rather than theoretical
 - a. Introduce you to the wide range of societies out there
- B. We then begin to explore the anthropological perspective on national identity
 1. Have to first ask what nationalism is
 - a. For example, is *nation* the same as *country*?
 - b. What is national identity? How does it differ from ethnic identity?
 2. Note: throughout the course, the purpose of questions like this is **not** to discover the **BEST** definition of ethnic identity or nationalism

- a. In this respect, this course is not like your chemistry class, or other science and engineering courses
 - b. The purpose of these questions is to get you to think about these concepts systematically and comprehensively
 - c. To explore the various meanings of the terms we use (all of them have several meanings)
 - 1) To better understand the political, historical, social context of the meanings
 - 2) And become familiar with the idea that various meanings can co-exist, each one making a contribution to an analysis
 - 3) The several meanings of a term are useful for different kinds of scholarly and political goals
 - d. **DISCUSS:** how can you have a discussion in a course if all the words have several meanings and there's no "best" meaning?
 - 1) By everyone agreeing that there are several meanings
 - 2) And understanding these several meanings to some extent
 - 3) And everyone agreeing on a particular meaning for purposes of discussion that day
- C. We then move to some concepts related to ethnic and national identity
1. Colonialism, empire, state, culture
 - a. For example, is "state" the same as "nation"?
 2. And discuss how to define culture
 3. **DISCUSS:** your definition of culture?
- D. Then we'll look at ethnic conflict
1. There are two main kinds:
 - a. Conflict between ethnic groups
 - b. And conflict between a state and an ethnic group within its borders

- 1) Gladney and Nagel address ethnic/state conflict
 2. In some ways ethnic conflict permeates the course
 - a. Because it constantly calls attention to itself in our lives
 - 1) In the newspapers, TV
 - b. And because a fundamental premise in the social sciences holds:
 - 1) That you learn more about a subject
 - 2) By examining examples of malfunction, breakdown, too-rapid change
 - 3) You'll learn less when studying cases where things are going well
 - 4) For example: do you want to know about marriage in the 17th century New England?
 - a) Then study divorce in 17th century New England
- E. We then look at the concept of race
1. Which, like culture, informs ethnic and national identity
 - a. We look at notions about biology
 - b. Note that "biology" is a Western concept
 - c. If we're looking at societies cross-culturally
 - 1) Trying to understand their notions of "race"
 - 2) We have to first work to understand *their* notions about the materiality of the body
 - 3) What *they* understand to be inheritance from one person to another
 - 4) How *they* see physical relatedness between persons
 - d. **DISCUSS:** Think about "folk biology" concepts you know about

- 1) For example, “blood”
2. “Race” is one of those concepts that has many meanings
 - a. Which have changed over time
 - b. We will work to understand their history
 - c. “Nation,” “race” had very different meanings earlier in the West

F. Gender

1. An important lesson in this course is that one identity component (class, gender, nationality, sexual orientation)
 - a. Is always linked to the others—never stands in isolation in the real world
 - b. These identity components always co-occur in individuals’ identity
 - c. Some pairs are seen by members of a given culture to always or usually co-occur
 - d. Concepts about race are gendered, etc.
 - e. An example: Kath Weston found that for many people, in the U.S. Asian lesbians could not be butch¹
 - 1) **DISCUSS:** what does “butch” mean?
 - f. Weston says that the construction of Asian women at present is such that an Asian lesbian trying to act working class, for example, by becoming a mechanic, look as masculine as possible, will encounter more problems than will an African-American woman
 - f. An Asian lesbian who wants to be “butch” will have to work harder to overcome the stereotype of “oriental blossom,” a femininity that’s seen to inhere in Asian females
 - g. We will read about another example: de la Cadena’s essay titled “Women are more Indian,” about Andean Indians in Peru
3. While it is useful to separate out these identity components during analysis

¹ Weston, Kath, 1996. *Render Me, Gender Me: Lesbians Talk Sex, Class, Color, Nation, Studmuffins...* New York: Columbia University Press.

- a. After all, this is what analysis is
- b. Keep in mind that we can only isolate them during examination; no one is ever only a man, only an African-American, only an Italian

G. Sexuality

- 1. Same thing: we will read about how sexuality is raced, ethnicized, classed

H. Religion

- 1. We will pay particular attention to connections between religion and ethnic/national identity—actual connections, or connections made in people’s minds
 - a. Islam: the Gladney book
 - b. **DISCUSS:** Jewishness: religion, ethnicity, race—stereotypes about Jewish bodies?
 - 1) “He doesn’t *look* Jewish”
 - 2) Jokes were made about African-American movie actor Sammy Davis converting to Judaism not “looking Jewish”
 - 3) Ethiopian Jews who moved to Israel: Falashi: “black Jews”
 - a) They experienced racism, people had difficulty accepting them as truly Jewish
 - 4) Children of black/Jewish parents will say they felt they had to choose an identify—they weren’t allowed to be both
 - c. Like the Asian lesbian butch, these difficulties reveal stereotypes; what combinations of identity components are permitted or not
- 2. By the way, it’s OK to speculate in this class, you just have to make sure you tell us that you’re speculating
 - a. It’s OK to talk about stereotypes, if you make it clear that this is what you’re doing

I. Then we move to language, culture and ethnicity

IV. We next look at current trends in scholarship on ethnic and national identity

- A. Transnationalism, globalization are stressed more
 - B. Culture recovery movements—“heritage” initiatives
 - 1. An example is the “Celtic revival” in England, Scotland, Ireland, even in Brittany
 - 2. **DISCUSS:** other examples you can think of?
 - C. We consider culture as commodity: issues surrounding “appropriating” culture, fears about “losing” culture, “enriching” culture, “recovering” culture, all for the purpose of “selling” culture
 - D. We move on to “rights” movements, which are concerned with ensuring rights of all kinds
 - 1. Both the foundational assumptions of human rights, civil rights
 - a. Out of the liberal philosophical tradition
 - 2. And the notion of collective and culture-specific rights
 - E. Then identity politics, New Social Movements
 - 1. Mobilizing around identity components
 - a. Gender, indigeneity
 - 2. Religious mobilizing has been going on for a long time
 - F. And transnationalism—diaspora, migration, refugees, globalization’s effects
- V. Students will present their third papers at the end of the course

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

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