This course offers a general introduction to sociocultural anthropology. It investigates the different ways by which humanity has organized its social institutions and cultural systems; it explores what produces that diversity and how societies changes. By examining the similarities and differences among societies and cultures around the world, this course helps us to better understand ourselves and others. By introducing what anthropologists study and how they study the various subjects, this course will also briefly review the theories and methods in the field of sociocultural anthropology.

Required Textbooks:


Both books are available at the UCLA bookstore.

Course Requirements:

(1) Assignment #1 (5 points), due on Jan. 31;
(2) Midterm exam (30 points), scheduled on Feb. 14;
(3) Assignment #2 (10 points), due on Mar. 7;
(4) Final exam (40 points), scheduled on Mar. 24 (Friday), 3:00-6:00 PM;
(5) Participation in discussion sections (15 points), to be recorded on each section.

Policy Note:

(1) No make up exams will be given without prior consent from the instructor.
(2) Anyone who wants to contest a grade must do so in writing, within five days after the exam/assignment is returned to students.
(3) Attendance to both class meetings and discussion sections are mandatory. Students earn 1.5 point by attending and participating in each discussion section.
Weekly Topic and Readings

Week 1. Introduction and Ways of Making a Living (Jan. 10 & 12)
Ember and Ember, Cultural Anthropology, Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 1-28.

Week 2. Ways of Making a Living Continued (Jan. 17 & 19)
Ember and Ember, Cultural Anthropology, Chapter 5, pp. 68-85, and the first two sections of Chapter 6 “The allocation of resources” and “The conversion of resources,” pp. 87-97.
Film “A World without Fathers and Husbands” on Jan. 19.

Ember and Ember, Cultural Anthropology, Chapters 9 and 10, pp. 144-185.
A. Weiner, The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea, Chapter 3, pp. 51-64.

Week 4. Ways of Becoming and Being a Person (Jan. 31 & Feb. 2)
Ember and Ember, Cultural Anthropology, Chapter 13, pp. 222-240.
A. Weiner, The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea, Chapter 4, pp. 65-79.
Film “Death of a Shaman” on Feb. 2.

Week 5. Ways of Consumption and Exchange (Feb. 7 & 9)

Week 6. Ways of Stratification and Hierarchy (Feb. 14 & 16)
Ember and Ember, Cultural Anthropology, Chapters 7 and 8, pp. 108-143.
A. Weiner, The Trobrianders of Papua New Guinea, Chapter 6, pp. 97-110


Week 7. Ways of Social Control and Order: Power and Politics (Feb. 21 & 23)
Ember and Ember, Cultural Anthropology, Chapter 12, pp. 201-221.
Film “The Yanomamo” on Feb. 23.

Week 8. Ways of Making Sense of Life: Religion and Ritual (Feb. 28 & Mar. 2).
Ember and Ember, Cultural Anthropology, Chapters 14 and 15, pp. 241-272.

Week 9. Ways of Cultural Change and Cultural Survival (Mar. 7 & 9)
Film “N!ai: The Story of !Kung Woman” on Mar. 9.

Week 10. Anthropology and Contemporary Societies (Mar. 14 & 16)
Ember and Ember, Cultural Anthropology, Chapters 17-19, pp. 295-337

Final exam scheduled on March 24 (Friday), 3:00-6:00 PM.