

ANTH 112:23 – Introduction to Socio-Cultural Anthropology

Winter Semester 2021

Tues. 6:45-8:00pm | Thurs. 5:15-6:30pm

Dr. Meghann E. Jack

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Office Location: JBB-335G

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30pm-4:30pm | Thursdays 11:30am-1:00pm | Fridays 2:30pm-3:30pm or by appointment (virtual meetings via Teams are encouraged)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Anthropology pursues the comparative and holistic study of humans throughout the world. No other discipline takes such a long and complex view of humanity across time and space: from the earliest origins of our development, through to the emergence of civilizations, to the nature of past and present societies. In socio-cultural anthropology, you will study living peoples and their cultures, including variation and change. Select topics to be covered include: the origins of socio-cultural anthropology as a discipline; the concept of culture; methods and approaches in the study of socio-cultural anthropology; language and oral narrative; material culture; exchange and livelihood; consumption; marriage, family, and kinship; custom, ritual, and rites of passage; belief systems; and issues surrounding globalization and culture change. You will also read a short ethnography, the written results of anthropological research. Three credits.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Brown, Nina, Thomas McIlwraith, and Laura Tubelle de González, eds. 2020. *Perspectives: An Open Invitation to Cultural Anthropology*. 2nd ed. Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association. E-book. [Download for free from: <http://perspectives.americananthro.org/>]
- Barker, John. 2016. *Ancestral Lines: The Maisin of Papua New Guinea and the Fate of the Rainforest*. Teaching Culture: UTP Ethnographies for the Classroom. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. [E-book form available. Purchase text @ campus bookstore or online from publisher or another retailer]
- All other readings are available for download on our Moodle course site.

EVALUATION

<u>Project</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Due date</u>
Class Engagement (Moodle Discussion Forum)	10%	Weekly, due on Thursdays
Mid-term Exam	20%	February 23
Ethnography Chapter Reviews	10%	March 18 & April 06
Object Analysis	15%	March 09
Ethnography Short Essay	20%	April 08
Final Exam	25%	TBA

CLASS SCHEDULE

*Schedule is subject to change depending on class cancellations and how quickly we cover course material. I will keep you informed of any schedule changes in class or via Moodle announcements.

WEEK	DATE	TOPICS & READINGS
1	Jan. 14	Introductions Overview of Syllabus & Course Expectations Jan. 14 class is ONLINE via Collaborate
2	Jan. 19 & Jan. 21	Introducing Anthropology The Culture Concept Jan. 19 & 21 classes are ONLINE via Collaborate READ: <i>Perspectives</i> , Chp. 1 “Introduction to Anthropology” <i>Perspectives</i> , Chp. 2 “The Culture Concept” RECOMMENDED: <i>Perspectives</i> , Chp. 13 “The History of Anthropological Ideas”
3	Jan. 26 & Jan. 28	Doing Cultural Documentation READ: <i>Perspectives</i> , Chp. 3 “Doing Fieldwork: Methods in Cultural Anthropology” Fluehr-Lobban, “Cultural Relativism and Universal Human Rights” Barker, Chp. 1 “Fieldwork among the Maisin”
4	Feb. 2 & Feb. 4	Communicating Culture & Experience: Language & Oral Narrative READ: <i>Perspectives</i> , Chp. 4 “Language” McIlwraith, “ ‘The Bloody Moose Got Up and Took Off’: Talking Carefully about Food Animals in a Northern Athabaskan Village” **pay attention to the Maisin folktales, myths, and legends that Barker relates in <i>Ancestral Lines</i>
5	Feb. 9 & Feb. 11	Material Culture READ: Welsch and Vivanco, “Materiality” Kay, “Life-Story Objects: Folk Art and Aging in Indiana” ** pay attention to the production, use, and changing meanings of tapa cloth in Maisin culture as you read Barker’s <i>Ancestral Lines</i>
6	Feb. 16 & Feb. 18	Essay Writing Workshop Mid-Term Exam Review No Class on Feb. 16 – StFX Study Day

WEEK	DATE	TOPICS & READINGS
7	Feb. 23 & Feb. 25	<p>Exchange & Livelihood</p> <p>Mid-Term Exam on Feb. 23</p> <p>READ: <i>Perspectives</i>, Chp. 5 “Subsistence”</p>
8	Mar. 2 & Mar. 4	<p>Exchange & Livelihood continued</p> <p>READ: <i>Perspectives</i>, Chp. 6 “Economics” Barker, Chp. 2 “Making a Living”</p> <p>Consumption</p> <p>READ: <i>Perspectives</i>, Chp. 6 section “Consumption and Global Capitalism,” pp. 135-139 Arnold, Graesch, Ragazzini, and Ochs, “Material Saturation: Mountains of Possessions”</p>
9	Mar. 9 & Mar. 11	<p>Marriage, Family, & Kinship</p> <p>Object Analysis Assignment Due Mar. 09</p> <p>READ: <i>Perspectives</i>, Chp. 8 “Family & Marriage” Collard and Kashmeri, “Embryo Adoption: Emergent Forms of Siblingship among Snowflakes Families” Barker, Chp. 3 “The Social Design”</p>
10	Mar. 16 & Mar. 18	<p>Custom, Ritual, & Rites of Passage</p> <p>Ethnography Chapter Review Due Mar. 18</p> <p>READ: Robinson, “ ‘We are Born to Die’: Death, Illness, and Grieving in Eskasoni” Herrmann, “New Lives from Used Goods: Garage Sales as Rites of Passage” ** pay attention to Barker’s descriptions of Maisin rites of passage, pp. 97-102</p>
11	Mar. 23 & Mar. 25	<p>Belief Systems</p> <p>READ: <i>Perspectives</i>, Chp. 11 “Religion” Gmelch, “Baseball Magic” Barker, Chp. 4 “The Spiritual Realm”; Chp. 5 “Community”</p>
12	Mar. 30 & Apr. 01	<p>Globalization & Culture Change</p> <p>No Class on Apr. 01 — StFX Study Day</p>

WEEK	DATE	TOPICS & READINGS
12 con'td		READ: <i>Perspectives</i> , Chp. 12 “Globalization” Barker, Chp. 6 “Culture Change: Tapa and the Rainforest”; Chp. 7 “Ancestral Lines”
13	Apr. 06 & Apr. 08	Course Wrap-Up & Final Exam Review Ethnography Chapter Review Due Apr. 06 <i>Ancestral Lines</i> Essay Due Apr. 08

ASSIGNMENT & EXAM DETAILS

Class Engagement

Weekly, on Thursdays

10%

I expect you to attend class regularly and engage with the lecture material and class discussion. Throughout the term you will also offer comments/reflections about the week’s course topic on our Moodle discussion forum. I will pose a discussion question, which you can choose to answer, or you can choose to comment on lectures and/or assigned reading(s). You are required to make one discussion post only per week, but you can make as many replies to other student’s posts as you wish. The discussion forum is intended to help you stay engaged with weekly course content. Each week’s forum will run from Thursday to Thursday, then it will close. Therefore, **you must complete your post within the allotted time frame.**

I expect your post to be at minimum several sentences to a paragraph in length (roughly 250 words), but you can write more if you desire. I am looking for you to show engagement with course materials, not passive responses like: “I really enjoyed this week’s lecture topic.” I want you to demonstrate engagement, connection, and reflective and critical thinking. What intrigued you or puzzled you? What challenged you? What do you want to know more about? What particular points in lectures or readings do you think are significant? Why? How do the course topics or concepts connect or contrast to your own life experiences and culture? To other courses you are taking? Each post is valued at one point towards your final grade. **There are 13 discussion posts over the course of the semester, and you may miss up to 3 posts over the course of the semester without penalty.**

Mid-term Exam

February 23

20%

The midterm exam will draw on material covered up to the class before the date of the exam including both in-class material (lectures, activities, discussions, and audio/visuals) and assigned readings. The goal will be to test your knowledge and application of key concepts in the course to date. The format will be a combination of objective (true/false; fill in the blank; multiple choice), short answer and/or short essay questions. I will expect you to reflect a solid understanding of the course material covered,

and I am looking for your ability to comprehend, synthesize, and apply the material. I do not test on such obscure details as individual names, specific historical dates etc.

Object Analysis

March 09

15%

This assignment requires you to explore material culture. It focuses on objects in their socio-cultural contexts, and develops observational, analytical, and interpretative skills, encouraging "visual literacy." In other words, how to "read" objects as "texts" and identify and describe the characteristics of their form and function, as well as offer interpretations on their social-cultural meanings for the people who make, use, value, or consume them.

Choose any **one object** of interest to you. It is best to focus on an object that is manageable to study and not too complex in detail. An entire house is probably not a good choice, but a smaller structure, like a shed or other outbuilding could work. The object can be a handmade artifact such as a quilt, a pair of knitted wool socks, a hand-thrown clay pot. It can also be a mass-produced object such as a Barbie doll, a toaster, a chair, a bicycle, a china cup. The age of the object does not matter. It can be from the distant past, the recent past, or the present. You must assume that the reader knows nothing about your chosen object of analysis. **You must be able to physically access the object. Do not select an object that you cannot tangibly experience.**

1) **Form** — Study the object closely. If possible, hold it in your hands and carefully inspect it. Observe its form, its shape, its detail, and its stylistic/aesthetic features. What can you tell me about the materiality of the object? How does it look? What is it made of? What are its dimensions? How was it made? Describe the aesthetic or stylistic characteristics of the object. Can you determine what period of time it belongs to? Consult various sources to try to determine its age and/or stylistic features (i.e. conduct secondary research on the object at the library or via the Internet). **Photograph and/or carefully draw** the object from at least **two different angles**. Make the photographs as clear as possible. You may take a photograph of the object in context, but you may also find it useful to temporarily remove the object to a solid backdrop (like a white sheet) to photograph it. If possible, place a ruler or other scale in the photograph to show size.

2) **Context** — Observe the situational context of the object. Where is it located? How does it interact with other objects? How does it interact with its surrounding environment? Is it part of a collection? Where and how is it displayed? Where was the object made? When was it made? How did it arrive at its current location?

3) **Function or Use** — How is the object used? What function(s) does it serve? If it is an old object, did it once have a life different to the one it has now? Speculate on that previous life. Think about the object's "biography." Consult various sources about how it was initially used (e.g. ask the owner or someone who would have used it; conduct secondary research on the object at the library or via the Internet).

4) **Interpretation** — Drawing on your knowledge of the anthropological study of material culture from class lectures and readings, interpret the object for its social-cultural meanings. There is really no right or wrong interpretation here, however **try to avoid obvious interpretations** that focus only on the functional aspects of the object. (e.g. socks keep your feet warm). Rather, consider how the object

reflects and reveals the culture of its owner, its user, or consumer, or how it reflects the culture and/or time in which it was made. You may wish to interpret your object through a particular thematic or theoretical lens, such as: gender, social class or status, identity, memory and belonging, ethnicity, mobility, region and place, belief etc. For example, what does an object like a Barbie Doll reveal to us about our cultural assumptions regarding gender in 21st-century North America? How is a Royal Doulton china teacup a reflection of class, social status, and comportment? How is a handmade quilt connected to a family's sense of memory, belonging, and kinship? What does a Starbucks coffee cup indicate about mobility, convenience, and consumption practices among StFX university students?

In an essay of approx. **4-5 double spaced pages** (excluding images), present a descriptive and interpretative analysis of your selected object. Think about your paper in four parts:

1) Form 2) Context 3) Function or Use 4) Interpretation. **The main emphasis of your paper should be on interpreting the object, not describing it.**

You will use both primary (your own observations; questions you may ask an object's owner or user) and secondary research to complete this assignment. In your analysis you can draw on course reading materials or lectures, incorporating relevant points when applicable, in addition to library and Internet materials.

I also encourage you to consult the supplementary materials posted on Moodle ("Analyzing Objects" and "Frameworks for Interpreting Objects").

I will evaluate the assignment for your ability to follow instructions, provide adequate descriptive background or context of the object, include photographs and/or detailed drawings, and finally, your ability to suggest potential socio-cultural meaning(s) of the object. I also will judge the assignment for logical organization, clarity of writing, and use of correct grammar.

Ethnography Chapter Reviews

10%

March 18 & April 06

As you read John Barker's *Ancestral Lines: The Miasin of Papua New Guinea and the Fate of the Rainforest* (2016), you will complete two chapter reviews, prompted by guided questions. You may choose any two chapters to review (5% each). The assignment is meant to help you stay on track with reading the ethnography so that you do not become overwhelmed and hurriedly end up reading the whole text the night before your essay is due! It is also meant to help you identify and understand the important points of the book. Guided questions to help you process the book and write your reviews are available on Moodle. Your chapter reviews should offer a brief summary of what the chapter is about and its major conclusions, as well as how the chapter connects to course concepts (lecture materials or assigned readings). Finally, you should also indicate questions that arise from reading the chapter.

Responses should be approx. 2-3 pages, double-spaced.

Choose to write your review on either Chp. 1, 2, or 3 for March 18

Choose to write your review on either Chp. 4, 5, or 6 for April 06

Ethnography Short Essay
April 08

20%

This assignment is designed to help you build critical reading, writing, and analytical skills, and give you the opportunity to engage with an ethnography, the written product of anthropological research. In approx. **5 double-spaced pages**, answer **ONE** of the following questions concerning John Barker's *Ancestral Lines: The Maisin of Papua New Guinea and the Fate of the Rainforest* (2016).

1. According to Lavenda and Schultz, "ethnography is ... a kind of *writing*; it is not just a straightforward reporting of "the facts." In other words, there is technique and intent involved. After reading Lavenda and Schultz's "Reading Ethnography," analyze *Ancestral Lines* as an ethnography. Consider Barker's writing style and techniques, organizational structure, use of description (both written and visual, such as photographs and diagrams), informant quotes, and local terms and expressions employed throughout the ethnography. Does Barker's representational techniques draw you into the story of the Maisin? How? What elements of the text do you find particularly useful in helping you understand the culture of the Maisin? How does Barker build your trust in him as a researcher? What is lacking in Barker's writing, photography, and overall representation of Maisin culture and community? What other perspectives or stories could he have included?
2. The tension or pull between tradition and modernity, continuity and change is a central theme in *Ancestral Lines*. How do the Maisin negotiate the dichotomy of past and present, cultural perseverance and cultural change? Is it possible to be part of the globalized, modern world and still retain "ancestral lines"? Consider this question especially in relation to the challenges and experiences of the Maisin with regards to cultural sustainability and economic development, community outmigration, and the legacies of colonialism and Christian missions.
3. Describe how the concept of *marawa-wawe* (reciprocal balance) operates in Maisin society. Analyze its dynamics. What are the benefits and challenges of this system? How do people succeed or fail in meeting those challenges?

Use clear and specific examples and, when applicable, direct quotations from the text to help support your analysis. I do not, however, want overly lengthy direct quotations nor an abundance of direct quotations. **Please use no more than three direct quotations in your paper. When you do employ them, they should be no more than 3 or 4 lines.**

Make sure you consult Lavenda and Schultz's "Reading Ethnography" in preparation of reading *Ancestral Lines*, and especially so if you are answering question #1. As you read Barker's ethnography, take detailed notes and pose questions to yourself as you move through the book. You are encouraged to draw on secondary, library sources into your paper to support and/or expand your points, but this is not mandatory.

I will evaluate the assignment for your comprehension of the text, your ability to clearly answer the question being asked and utilize adequate examples and descriptions from the ethnography to answer

the question and support your points. I also will judge the assignment for logical organization, clarity of writing, and use of correct grammar.

Final Exam

TBA

25%

The final exam will draw on material covered from the midterm up to and including the final week of classes from both in-class material (lectures and guest lectures, activities, discussions, and audio/visuals) and assigned readings. It will be designed in a way similar to the mid-term exam.

ASSIGNMENT FORMATTING & SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Formatting:

- 12 point Times New Roman font.
- 1" (2.54 cm) margins on all sides.
- **Chicago Author-Date** style for referencing. Please visit:
https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html
- Double-spaced.
- Insert page numbers.
- Assignment title, your name and student #, submission date, course name, and instructor name on a separate cover page OR the top left margin of your assignment.
- Paper meets required page length (don't worry if you are over the guidelines for length, but if you are significantly under you are probably not providing the detail of analysis required to successfully complete the assignment)
- Any quotation longer than three lines should be a block quotation (indented on both sides and single-spaced *without* quotation marks) as per Chicago Author-Date style guidelines.
- Reference List/Bibliography numbered as last page of assignment for all secondary sources, including class notes and assigned readings. The Reference List page should not be counted towards your final page count.
- Any images are clear, each image is numbered and captioned, and all images are placed on a separate, numbered page(s) within your document (rather than embedded in the text).

Assignment Submissions and Extensions:

- **Submit all assignments via the designated dropbox on the Moodle course shell.**
- **Do not directly email assignments to me** unless I have given you permission to do so.
- All assignments are due on the specified date at the beginning of class. Late assignment submissions will incur a loss of **1/2 point per day**. Extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis. I'm very reasonable about extensions, as I prefer quality work submitted a day or two late than inferior work submitted on time.

OTHER COURSE DETAILS

Assigned Readings: Weekly readings are meant to complement, further illustrate, and/or expand upon lectures and course topics, as well as help facilitate further thought and discussion about anthropology. While I understand that you may not be able to read *everything* listed in the syllabus, your comprehension of course material and ability to engage in class discussion will improve if you read *something*. **Note that you will be tested on both assigned readings and lectures.**

Attendance: You are expected to attend class regularly as it is a key to academic success. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain any course materials given during your absence and to reach out to a friend or classmate for lecture notes. Typically, any handouts will be posted on the course Moodle site. I rarely provide lecture slides or notes on Moodle, but I will do my best to accommodate your learning needs if you must miss class for legitimate medical/personal reasons. Meet with me face-to-face to discuss options. I will provide exam study guides and allocate class time for review and questions as the exam date approaches.

Technology Policy: Please put your phone on silent throughout class. Smartphone use during class time is disrespectful. Why bother coming to class and shelling out lots of money if you aren't ready to commit your full attention and actively learn? Unless you need to use a laptop to take notes because of a documented disability, multiple studies show that laptops do not facilitate better note-taking abilities and course material comprehension. I encourage you to instead take pen and paper notes—a useful skill to develop! If you do use a laptop, please sit at the back of the class so as not to distract other students. Audio recording lectures is only permitted for students who are registered with the Tramble Centre and request this as part of their accommodations.

Accommodations: I would appreciate if students with disabilities—whether visible or non-visible—let me know of their situation as early as possible in the semester. I will do my best to accommodate students with unique learning needs, as well as those studying under other special circumstances (e.g. single parents, mature learners returning to school, students with English as an additional language etc.) The Tramble Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) provides assistance in determining and facilitating appropriate accommodations for students with verified disabilities. The Tramble Centre welcomes students with documented permanent disabilities and offers them a student-centred program of support. Located in Room 108 of the Angus L MacDonald Library, new and returning students meet with program staff to discuss options for support. The deadline for registering with the Centre is two weeks prior to the end of classes each semester and three business days' notice is required for booking all accommodated tests and exams. To book an appointment please use the following link: stfxcal.mywconline.com Phone 902-867-5349; Email: tramble@stfx.ca

Classroom Respect, Diversity and Inclusion: Everyone learns more effectively in a respectful, safe, and equitable learning environment, free from discrimination and harassment. I invite you to join with me to create a classroom space—both real and virtual—that fosters and promotes values of human dignity, equity, non-discrimination, and respect for diversity. Disagreeing with readings or points raised in lectures or discussions by myself or fellow students is an expected part of university learning. I welcome you all to freely share your diverse opinions and perspectives, but please do so in a respectful way. Please feel free to contact the Human Rights and Equity Advisor Megan Fogarty if you have questions or concerns about equity in the classroom or in the StFX Community in general. Megan can be contacted by email at mfogarty@stfx.ca or by telephone at 902-867-5306.

One of the learning objectives of this course is to recognize and appreciate the diversity of human culture and to further cross-cultural understanding and competency. Please note that in this course you may encounter cultural practices and values that you personally find objectionable, laughable, or that make you feel uneasy or uncomfortable. **Cultural relativism**, a guiding principle in anthropology, asks us to understand beliefs and practices within their own unique cultural context, and to not set our own culture as the standard against which all other cultures must be measured. However, this does not mean that we cannot be critical of certain cultural behaviours or that we must accept them as morally right.

Territorial Acknowledgement: Let us respectfully acknowledge that StFX University sits on traditional unceded Mi'kmaq territory. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which were first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations. We are all Treaty people.

Academic Integrity: Cheating and plagiarism are serious offences that are not tolerated by StFX. Such actions can result in an **automatic zero**, and thus **possible course failure**. Please refer to section 3.8 of the StFX Academic Calendar for a more detailed description of academic dishonesty and its implications. Please do not plagiarize (this includes work from other students as well as scholarly and Internet sources), but be honest in your work. Summarize and paraphrase material and appropriately cite the source of your information, including those summarized/paraphrased passages as well as direct quotations. If you are struggling with this, both myself and the Student Success Centre can guide you in citing sources and suggest strategies you can utilize to avoid plagiarism.

Reading, Writing, and Study Assistance: Please do not hesitate to contact me for assistance in these areas. I encourage you to also visit the **Student Success Centre**, a valuable free service for all students that provides professional one-on-one reading, writing, and study instruction. The Student Success Centre can also assist you with how to avoid plagiarism and how to properly cite your sources using various style guides. Visit <https://www2.mystfx.ca/student-success/> to learn more and book an appointment.

Cancellations: If class must be cancelled due to illness or other unforeseen reasons, I will notify you via Moodle announcements. Check StFX's website for campus closures regarding weather or other events. If class is cancelled or the university is closed, assigned readings will remain the same. However, due dates for assignments will be bumped ahead to the next class.

How to Reach Me: I encourage you to visit with me face-to-face (virtually via Teams is encouraged) during my scheduled office hours or make an appointment if you have questions about course materials, readings, or assignments. While you can reach out to me on Moodle, the *best* way to contact me is directly by email: mejacks@stfx.ca. Please note that it is hard to answer complex course questions via email. It is best to speak with me face-to-face.

Important Course Change & Drop Dates: **January 21** – Last day to change second-term courses. Last day to receive full tuition refund for second-term courses, when applicable; **March 04** – Last day for partial tuition refund for second-term courses, when applicable; **March 19** – Last day to drop second-term three-credit courses.