**ANTH3170: AMERICA: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Tuesday/Thursday, 2:00 – 3:15 p.m. Hale 230 Spring 2017

**Instructor:** Allison Formanack

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**Office Hours:** Hale 135M, TBD

**Course Description:**What is America? Who are the American people? How is American culture defined both “at home” and abroad? In this course, we will consider how American-trained anthropologists have developed theoretical, methodological, and applied approaches to studying “American society,” broadly defined. From the “Americanist” tradition developed out of Boasian attention to salvaging Native American linguistic and cultural traditions, to mid-twentieth century community and urban studies inspired by the Chicago School, to more recent scholarship on “home work” following the 1980s Crisis of Representation, we will cover numerous topics and themes developed from ethnographic studies of the United States. Methodologically, we will consider how working in one’s own community or nation denaturalizes the researcher/subject binary in cultural anthropology through autoethnographic writing. Furthermore, this course will draw attention to the continued controversy over U.S.-based fieldwork within a discipline largely known and valued for its research in locations more foreign and distant to the researcher and their audience.

**Required Texts:** (*All required texts are available at the CU Bookstore)*

1. Gusterson, Hugh and Catherine Besteman, eds. 2010. The Insecure American: How We Got Here & What We Should Do About It. Berkeley: University of California Press.

2. Garcia, Angela. 2010. The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession along the Rio Grande. Berkeley: University of California Press.

3. Wilkins, Amy C. 2008. Wannabes, Goths, and Christians: The Boundaries of Sex, Style, and Status. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

4. Additional articles and book chapters posted to the course D2L site.

**Evaluation:**

*Writing Assignments* (90%): These written assignments ask students to apply course themes and concepts in grounded, practical contexts. These assignments will incorporate in-class activities (as noted on the syllabus). The activities will span from guided to independent, individual or group-based. Students will analyze and write up responses, which will be graded on a scale of 100 points. Instructions for each assignment will be provided in-class as well as on the course D2L website.

* **Assignment #1, February 28:** “The Invisible Knapsack”
* **Assignment #2, April 4:** “The Business of Drugs”
* **Assignment #3, May 4:** “Autoethnography”

*Class Participation* (10%)*:* Regular attendance and your active participation will be crucial to your success in this course. Participating students are those who arrive to class on time, are prepared and have finished all of the assigned readings, take notes on the material, ask questions, and meaningfully contribute to course discussions.

**Course Requirements & Expectations:**

*Readings:* This course includes a **significant** amount of reading. It is crucial to your success that you come to class having finished each of the readings assigned for that day and prepared to discuss specific points or themes. **Pop-quizzes** over reading assignments will take place periodically throughout the course; these evaluations will be unannounced and will be calculated into the student’s participation grade.

*Email Communication:* Although students are welcome and encouraged to meet the instructor either (briefly) after class or during office hours, email is expected to be the primary means by which out-of-class communication will occur throughout the course. It is recommended that you check your student email account at least once a day during the class to keep up with any announcements or changes to the syllabus. Similarly, you are invited to email the instructor any questions you have; however, please keep in mind that emails sent in relation to this course are *professional communications*. Emails should include a salutary address, be grammatically correct and without typos, be professional in tone and signed at the end.

*Phone and Computer Usage:* Phones, tablets, and laptops are distractions to students and their neighbors. Students are asked to silence and put away their phones when they arrive in class; anyone caught texting or playing on their phones during lecture will be docked participation points. Students are welcome to use laptops and tablets for the sole purpose of taking notes during class; similarly, if the instructor notices students using these devices to check their Facebook status or catch up on emails they will be docked participation points. If any of these devices become a problem or begin affecting class dynamics, these policies may shift.

**Academic Honesty, Plagiarism, and the Honor Code**: Academic dishonesty or plagiarism will not be tolerated to any extent: this includes copying another students’ work on an exam or writing assignment, not citing quoted sources, copy/pasting from Internet articles without citation, or completing assignments on behalf of another student. Students who plagiarize or engage in academic dishonesty will receive an automatic failing grade for the course. Violations of the CU Honor Code will be immediately reported to the Honor Code Office. For more information regarding academic honesty and the CU Honor Code, please visit the following websites:

* <http://honorcode.colorado.edu/>
* <http://www.colorado.edu/engineering/academics/policies/honesty>

**Student Accommodations**: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please inform the instructor as soon as possible. You will be asked to provide documentation from Disability Services (<http://disabilityservices.colorado.edu/>) so that proper accommodations may be arranged. If you have any questions regarding accommodations or how to obtain documentation for any disability, please contact Disability Services at (303) 492-871 or [DSInfo@colorado.edu](mailto:DSInfo@colorado.edu).

**Course Syllabus**

**Part I: The Americanist Tradition**

January 17: Course Introduction

January 19: Morgan, Boas, and the Legacy of Native North Americans Studies

**Reading:** Nancy Lurie, “Relations Between Indians and Anthropologists” (1988), D2L

January 24: Folk Traditions and African American Community Studies

**Reading:** Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (1935), D2L

**Part II: Ideological State(s) of America**

January 26: Social Class in America (Pt. 1)

**Reading:** Ehrenreich, Gusteron & Besteman, “Foreword & Introduction” (TIA)

January 31: Social Class in America (Pt. 2)

***Film:*** *People Like Us: Social Class in America* (2001)

February 2: Privilege and Meritocracy

**Writing Assignment #1 Activity (in-class)**

**Reading:** Wannabes, Goths, and Christians (WGC), Chapter 1

February 7: Subcultures (Before They Were Cool)

**Reading:** WGC, Chapters 2-3

February 9: Religion in the United States (Pt. 1)

**Reading:** Susan Harding, “Get Religion” (TIA)

February 14: Sexuality – Identities and Performances

**Reading:** WGC, Chapters 4-5

February 16: Untangling “Race” and “Culture”

**Reading:** WGC, Chapters 6-7

February 21: A Post-Racial United States?

**Readings:** WGC, Chapter 8 (Finish)

Lee D. Baker, “Racism, Risk, and the New Color of Dirty Jobs” (TIA)

**Part III: American Life at the Margins**

February 23: Discovering the “Other” America

February 28: Middletown & Yankeetown: Early Community Studies

***WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE***

March 2: The War on Drugs

**Readings:** The Pastoral Clinic (PC), Introduction

Philippe Bourgois, “Useless Suffering: The War on Homeless Drug Addicts” (TIA)

March 7: The Business of Drugs

**Writing Assignment #2 Activity (in-class)**

**Reading:** PC, Chapters 1-2

March 9: The American Carceral State

**Reading:** Roger N. Lancaster, “Republic of Fear: the Rise of Punitive Governance in America” (TIA)

March 14: Medicalization and Prescription Drug Abuse

**Readings:** PC, Chapter 3

Joseph Duumit, “Normal Insecurities, Healthy Insecurities” (TIA)

March 16: Death in America

**Readings:** PC, Chapter 4

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, “Death and Dying in Anxious America” (TIA)

**Part IV: Theorizing the City**

March 21: Urban Anthropology

March 23: Neoliberalism

**Readings:** PC, Chapter 5 & Conclusion (Finish)

David Graeber, “Neoliberalism, or the Bureaucratization of the World” (TIA)

**March 27 – March 31: SPRING BREAK, NO CLASSES**

April 4: Gentrification and Urban Revitalization

***WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2 DUE***

April 6: Deindustrialization, Wages, and the Service Economy

**Reading:** Jane L. Collins, “The Age of Wal-Mart” (TIA)

Christine Walley, “Deindustrializing Chicago: a Daughter’s Story” (TIA)

April 11: Suburbanization & Gated Communities

**Readings:**  Setha Low, “A Nation of Gated Communities” (TIA)

Brett Williams, “Body and Soul: Profits from Poverty” (TIA)

April 13: Relics of Americana – Trailer Parks

**April 18 – 20: Writing Assignment #3 Activity (Self-Guided, NO CLASSES)**

**Part V: The State of the Union**

April 25: Culture Wars & Political Polarization

**Readings:** Susan F. Hirsch, “Deploying Law as a Weapon in America’s War on Terror” (TIA)

Janine R. Wedel, “Compounding Insecurity: What the Neocon Core Reveals about America Today” (TIA)

April 27: A Nation of Immigrants (Pt. 1)

**Reading:** Peter Kwong, “Walling Out Immigrants” (TIA)

May 2: A Nation of Immigrants (Pt. 2)

***Film:***  *Welcome to Shelbyville* (2011)

May 4: Looking Ahead – America, 2050

***WRITING ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE***