

ANTH 239-001 The Ethnography of Amazonia – Course Syllabus Fall 2013

Course venue and time: EA 106.2, Tuesdays/Thursdays, 13:00-14:15.

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Pre-requisites for this course: One of ANTH 100, GEOG 100, HIST 100, HIST 110, INDG 101, PSCI 100, or SOC 100.

Timetable for course readings, assignments and presentations

The timetable below lists for each date the bibliography that you will be expected to have read for that date. Empty boxes for dates indicate that we will continue to discuss readings from previous dates.

	Tuesday		Thursday	
January/ Week 1			7	Syllabus, announcements
January/ Week 2	12	Erickson (2008). We will assign groups for presentations on this day.	14	
January/Week 3	19	Conklin and Morgan (1996)	21	Lagrou (2000)
January/Week 4	26		28	Gow (2000)
February/Week 5	2	Mid-term exam	4	Londoño Sulkin (2012: Introduction) OR Walker (Prologue and Chapter 1)
February/Week 6	9	Group #1 discussion/presentations	11	Viveiros de Castro (1998)
February /Week 7	16	Winter Break	18	Winter Break
February /Week 8	23	Londoño Sulkin (Chapter 1) OR Walker (Chapter 2)	25	Londoño Sulkin (Chapter 2) OR Walker (Chapter 3)
March / Week 9	1	Group #2 discussion/ presentations	3	Londoño Sulkin (Chapter 3) OR Walker (Chapter 4)
March /Week 10	8	Group # 3 discussion / presentations	10	Londoño Sulkin (Chapter 4) OR Walker (Chapter 5)
March/ Week 11	15	Group # 4 discussion / presentations	17	Londoño Sulkin (Chapter 5) OR Walker (Chapter 6)
March / Week 12	22	Group # 5 discussion / presentations	24	Londoño Sulkin (Chapter 6) OR Walker (Epilogue)
March/ Week 13	29	Group # 6 discussion / presentations	31	Killick (2008)
April/ Week 14	5	Mid-term essay due	7	Cepek (2011))
April/Week 15	12	Chernela (2010) and other news items on Amazonia.		

General overview

This course will acquaint students with some of the key issues addressed in Amazonianist anthropology and with some of the current debates now guiding research in the area.

The first reading will be Erickson's (2008) article, a useful review of the debates and discussions that have taken place in the archeological, historical, and ecological scholarship of the region. We will also look at maps to develop basic knowledge of the main rivers in the region, and the nation-states that encompass the Amazon. We will then move on to social and cultural anthropological readings, beginning with Conklin and Morgan (1996), a sophisticated, comparative account of North American and indigenous Amazonian understandings of personhood, with considerations for ethical issues such as adoption, abortion, cannibalism, and infanticide. Lagrou (2012) is a delicious text on Cashinahua understandings of bodies, selves, sociality, and emotion, and Gow's essay is a brilliant piece on Piro people's understandings of personhood and social life as revealed in expressed attitudes towards child-raising and death. The first mid-term exam will address the readings up until this point.

We will then begin the second and central section of this course (Feb 4 –March 29th), when you will engage with two full-fledged ethnographic monographs: Londoño Sulkin (2012) and Walker (2013). Students are expected to choose **one** of these, such that roughly half the class reads one and half the class reads the other. There will be group work and group discussions frequently; the idea is to have groups of four people each, with two people in each group reading one of the monographs and two people reading the other. Group members are charged with ensuring that the entire group is familiar with the content of both monographs; there will be ample class time to ensure that this is the case. Londoño Sulkin's monograph focuses on People of the Centre, in the Colombian Amazon, and Walker's focuses on Urarina people of the Peruvian Amazon. In a more or less parallel fashion, they engage with indigenous understandings and practices regarding personhood, child-raising, interpersonal relations, gender, social organization, livelihood, cosmology, knowledge, rituals, morality, and death. Both books address as well these people's historical transformations and their engagements with the nation-state. Throughout the course, I will be calling attention to other aspects of social life in Amazonia: everyday life and economic production, hierarchy and leadership, shamanism, humour, peace, violence, love, and personal biographies. There will be a digression early on to tackle Viveiros de Castro (1998), a seminal text that has shaped Amazonianist scholarship over the last two decades. The mid-term essay will address everything you've read in class till this point. I will provide the topic in class.

Killick's (2008) and Cepek's (2011) articles both address common, current circumstances of colonial exploitation, intergroup conflict, and indigenous Amazonians' political negotiation and other engagements with the nation-state and the institutions dependent on it. The final, take-home essay will address these articles, Amazonian news items, and elements of the two monographs.

Course assessment

Mid-term exam (February 2, 2016)	25%
Group presentations	20%
Mid-term essay (due April 5, 2016)	35%
Final essay, due	20%

The mid-term exam will address the course literature broached till January 28, inclusive. It will be in essay form, though there may be a map element and some short answers as well. The exam is a required component to receive a grade in this course. The mid-term essay is also a required component of the course; I will share with students several possible essay questions as we advance on the readings. You will

receive the question for the final essay –also a required component of the course— during the last week of classes.

Both essays should be between 5 and 8 double-spaced pages long. You will be graded on the pertinence and clarity of your arguments, on your manifest ability to understand and make coherent use of different course readings, and on the quality of your writing. Make sure you give proper credit to your sources. If you cannot submit an essay on time, let me know beforehand! I will not normally accept late submissions without prior arrangement.

Each group will be charged with presenting a certain topic to the class. This will require careful reading of the class material, and much group discussion to ensure that everybody has at least a fair grasp of the monograph your peers in your group *didn't* read. (I trust you will have a good grasp of the monograph you did read, since you're charged with explaining it to your group.) You will be graded on your entire group's manifest grasp of key concepts, its ability to present persuasively and clearly, and its capacity to respond to questions. You may submit your presentation notes to me as well, if you choose to do so.

Bibliography

Students are required to choose **one** of two book-length ethnographies -- Londoño Sulkin (2012) OR Walker (2013) – which they will read in their entirety. These are available for purchase at the University Bookstore. The rest of the readings are available on UR Courses.

- Cepek, Michael L. 2011. Foucault in the forest: Questioning environmentality in Amazonia. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 501–515.
- Chernela, Janet 2010. Opposition in the Time of Avatar: Belo Monte Dam in the Brazilian Amazon. *Anthropology News*, Vol. 51, No. 8, pp. 26, 27.
- Conklin, Beth A. and Morgan, Lynn M. 1996. Babies, Bodies, and the Production of Personhood in North America and a Native Amazonian Society. *Ethos* 24(4):657-694
- Erickson, Clark L. 2008. Amazonia: The Historical Ecology of a Domesticated Landscape. In *Handbook of South American Archaeology*, edited by Silverman, Helaine and Isbell, William. New York: Springer Science + Business Media. Pp. 157-183
- Gow, Peter. 2000. Helpless - the affective preconditions of Piro social life. In *The anthropology of love and anger : the aesthetics of conviviality in Native Amazonia*, edited by Overing, Joanna and Passes, Alan. London: Routledge. pp. 46-63
- Killick, Evan. 2008. Creating Community: Land Titling, Education, and Settlement Formation Among the Ashéninka of Peruvian Amazonia. *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 22–47.
- Lagrou, Elsje Maria. 2000. Homesickness and the Cashinahua self: a reflection on the embodied condition of relatedness. In *The anthropology of love and anger : the aesthetics of conviviality in Native Amazonia*, edited by Overing, Joanna and Passes, Alan. London; London: Routledge. pp. 152-169
- Londoño Sulkin, Carlos David 2012. *People of Substance: An Ethnography of Morality in the Colombian Amazon*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo 1998. Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 4, 469-488

Walker, Harry 2013. *Under a Watchful Eye: Self, Power, and Intimacy in Amazonia*.
 Berkeley: University of California Press.

Date of announcement of change	Changes to the course
Jan 11, 2015	<p>I'd made a mistake in transcribing calendar dates. See the yellow-highlighted boxes in the timetable. I'd originally written 'March'. It should have been April. The same mistake is corrected in the due dates for course assessment; the midterm essay is due April 5.</p> <p>On pg 2, I'd mistyped Clark Erickson's name as 'Clarkson'. I've corrected that.</p>

Please do not forget to turn your cell phone BACK ON after class is done!