

**Anthropology 404/Women's Studies 404
Women and Culture**

**Fall Semester 2007
Mondays/Wednesdays 5:45 – 7:00 pm
Anthropology Building, Room 214
Professor: Cynthia Werner**

Office: Anthropology Building, Room 224

**Office Hours: Mondays, 12:00-2:00 pm, Tuesdays 3:00-5:00 pm; Weds. 1:30-4:30 pm;
Thursdays 4:00-5:00 pm, and by appointment**

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to the study of women and gender within the discipline of anthropology. In the first section of the course, we will examine the relationship between culture and biology. To what extent does biology determine gender roles? What approaches have anthropologists used to study the relationship between culture and biology, and to “denaturalize” power? In the next few sections of the course, we will examine the cultural construction of gender and gender roles in a variety of settings. We will cover a number of topics that have been studied by anthropologists, including: beliefs and practices related to fertility and childbirth; household patterns; marriage practices; gendered use of social space; alternative gender roles; and the gendered use of language. In the final section of the course, we will consider gender and gender roles within the context of global and local political economies. We will examine recent approaches in anthropology that challenge cultural relativism, by problematizing gender inequities and gender struggles in contemporary societies. In particular, we will focus on critical issues, such as gender-based violence, gender and poverty, gender and development, and gender and nationalism. Throughout the semester, we will examine women's experiences from various regions: Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, East Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, Melanesia, Africa, the Middle East, and North America.

Course Objectives:

- (1) Students should gain a thorough understanding of the concept of gender as the cultural construction of sexual difference.
- (2) Students should gain a culturally relative understanding of women's and men's experiences in different societies.
- (3) Students should learn to think critically and anthropologically about women's issues in contemporary societies.

Course Format: Most days of class will combine a short lecture with a class discussion of reading material. On some days, students will also be asked to informally discuss their research papers-in-progress. Films will be shown throughout the semester to illustrate the themes discussed in lecture and reading.

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for this course.

COURSE READINGS

- Martha Ward and Monica Edelstein. *A World Full of Women*. Fourth Edition. Allyn & Bacon. 2006.
- Caroline Brettell and Carolyn Sargent. *Gender in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Fourth Edition. Prentice-Hall. 2005.
- Serena Nanda. *Gender Diversity: Cross-cultural Variations*. Waveland Press. 2000.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

- **Research Papers (35% of course grade)**

You will be expected to write a 12-15 page (typed and double-spaced) research paper on a topic related to the anthropology of gender. For this paper, you may choose to write about how a certain woman (or man) has influenced the study of women and gender in anthropology, or you may choose to write a critical review of the anthropological research on a particular gender issue. You may select a topic that is covered in class, but the research for this paper should go beyond the course material. In order to provide a critical review, you will need to first describe what conclusions have been made by anthropologists who have studied this topic in this particular region or among this particular ethnic group. You should note whether the anthropologists who have studied this topic agree with each other. In addition to describing what other anthropologists have written, you should add your own thoughts about whether their arguments are supported by the evidence, whether their methods were appropriate and sufficient, and whether you agree with their conclusions.

It is crucial that your paper is guided by a central research question. You should get some ideas for your paper from the course readings. Your paper can be based on a variety of sources including academic articles and books (mandatory), news articles, and internet sources. Before the final paper is due, you will turn in a paper proposal (September 19), a paper bibliography (October 10), and a paper draft (October 24). The paper proposal should be a one paragraph description of your paper topic and your research question. The paper bibliography should include at least 8 sources that you will use for your final paper. The paper draft should be a minimum of 10 pages. These assignments will be reviewed but not graded. The late penalty for these assignments will be applied to the final paper grade. Further information on the paper assignment will be provided in class. Note: All papers will be turned in through Turnitin.com, an online resource to detect plagiarism.

- **Midterm & Final Exam (50% of course grade)**

You will take two exams in this course. Each exam counts for 25% of the final grade. Each exam will consist of several short essay questions.

- **Class Participation and Attendance (15% of grade for undergrads only)**

Class participation and attendance are required for this course. Attendance will be recorded with the help of a sign-in sheet. To get full credit for participation and attendance, you need to participate in class discussions. Most of the class time will be devoted to discussions of the readings. There is a lot of reading for this course, and you are expected to do the assigned reading *before* you come to class. Although I will lead the discussions, I expect you to participate in the discussions on a regular basis. After each class, I will take notes on

participation. Students who are regularly prepared for class will receive a higher participation grade than students who do not seem to do the reading on a regular basis. You do not have to say something every day to get a good grade, as long as you are following the conversation closely. As for attendance, you are allowed two unexcused absences during the semester without any penalty. All excused absences (with university documentation) will be accepted without penalty. At the end of the semester, I will assign a grade for participation and attendance. If you attend regularly, you can expect to receive a participation/attendance grade in the A or B range.

- **Critical Reviews of Articles (15% of course grade for graduate students only)**
Graduate students enrolled in this course will be expected to read one extra article for the first twelve weeks of class, and to prepare a one-page critical review. The critical review should include a summary of the author's main arguments, a discussion of this article's contribution to the field, and your critical evaluation. These extra articles were selected to give graduate students a stronger understanding of the history and current development of feminist anthropology. Each critical review should be turned into my mailbox by Friday afternoon. These articles may be discussed in class, but they will not be included on the exams (unless explicitly referred to in class lectures).

COURSE POLICIES

- ***Makeup Exams***
Makeup exams *must be* arranged in advance. If you have a legitimate excuse for missing the midterm or final, you can schedule a time to make it up in the anthropology office.
- ***Late Papers***
Late papers will be penalized two points for each weekday late. If the paper is extremely late, you may receive up to half the total points for the assignment. There are no exceptions to this policy.
- ***Academic Dishonesty***
The Aggie Honor Code states: "An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do." Please refer to the new Aggie Honor Code (www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/newcode.pdf) for the various definitions of academic misconduct. All cases of plagiarism and cheating in this class will be handled according to university policies. If you are caught plagiarizing or cheating, you will automatically receive a zero for the assignment and you may receive an F for the class. As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated.
- ***Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)***
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities are guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact the Office of Support Services for Students with Disabilities (Room 126, Koldus Building, 845-1637).

COURSE OUTLINE

8/27 ***Introduction to the Course***

SECTION ONE – NATURE VS. NURTURE

8/29 ***Gender and Prehistory***

M. Ward, Introduction (p. 1-14)

S. Nanda, Introduction (p. 1-9)

M. Conkey, “The Archaeology of Gender Today: New Vistas, New Challenges” (p. 53-62)

M. Ehrenberg, “The Role of Women in Human Evolution” (p. 16-21)

Week One (Grad Students): S. Ortner, “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?”

9/3 ***Early Studies in the Anthropology of Gender***

M. Ward, Ch. 2 (p. 44-67)

L. Lamphere, “The Domestic Sphere of Women and the Public World of Men: The Strengths and Limits of an Anthropological Dichotomy” (p. 86-95)

9/5 ***Biology, Gender and Human Evolution***

M. Ward, Ch. 4 (p. 100-119)

M. Zuk, “Animal Models and Gender” (p. 7-15)

N. Scheper-Hughes, “Lifeboat Ethics: Mother Love and Child Death in Northeast Brazil” (p. 31-37)

B. Hewlett, “The Cultural Nexus of Aka Father-Infant Bonding” (p. 37-48)

Week Two (Grad Students): M. Rosaldo, “Women, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview”

9/10 ***Film: Coming of Age***

9/12 ***Film: Cut From a Different Cloth: Burqas and Belief***

Week Three (Grad Students): S. Slocum, “Woman the Gatherer: Male Bias in Anthropology”

**** Professor at Conference – No Readings This Week ****

**** Use Time to Get Started on Your Research Paper ****

SECTION TWO – CULTURAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENDER

9/17 ***Beliefs and Practices Related to Menstruation, Pregnancy & Childbirth***

M. Ward, Ch. 3 (p. 70-97)

P. Galloway, “Where Have All the Menstrual Huts Gone? The Invisibility of Menstrual Seclusion in Late Prehistoric Southeast” (p.63-73)

A. Gottlieb, “From Pollution to Love Magic: The New Anthropology of Menstruation” (p. 256-267)

R. Davis-Floyd, “Gender and Ritual: Giving Birth the American Way” (p. 449-461)

C. Browner, “The Politics of Reproduction in a Mexican Village” (p. 461-471)

9/19

Women and Warriors and Hunters

L. Peach, "Gender and War: Are Women Tough Enough for Military Combat?" (p. 21-30)
A. Estioko-Griffin & P. Bion Griffin, "Woman the Hunter: The Agta" (p. 141-151)

Week Four (Grad Students): S. Franklin, "Postmodern Procreation: A Cultural Account of Assisted Reproduction"

****Paper Proposal Due****

9/24

Cross-Cultural Study of Romance and Marriage

M. Ward, Ch. 5 (p. 122-144)

C. Werner, "Women, Marriage and the Nation-State: The Rise of Nonconsensual Bride Kidnapping in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan" (handout)

Film: *Bride Kidnapping in Kyrgyzstan* (20 minutes)

9/26

Cross-Cultural Study of Families and Households

C. Stack, "Domestic Networks: 'Those You Count on'" (p. 363-372)

M. Di Leonardo, "The Female World of Cards and Holidays: Women, Families, and the Work of Kinship" (p. 380-389)

M. Prior, "Matrifocality, Power, and Gender Relations in Jamaica" (p. 372-380)

Week Five (Grad Students): L. Lamphere, "Strategies, Cooperation, and Conflict Among Women in Domestic Groups"

10/1

****Exam One****

SECTION THREE – CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN GENDER AND SEX

10/3

Cross-Cultural Study of Gender Diversity:

Two-Spirits of Native North American and the Hijras of India

S. Nanda, Chs. 1-2 (p. 11-41)

Week Six (Grad Students): H. Whitehead, "The Bow and the Burden Strap: A New Look at Institutionalized Homosexuality in Native North America"

10/8

Cross-Cultural Study of Gender Diversity:

Gender Variations in Brazil and Polynesia

M. Ward, Ch. 7 (p. 169-192)

S. Nanda, Chs. 3-4 (p. 43-70)

10/10

Cross-Cultural Study of Gender Diversity:

Gender Variations in Asia and Euro-American Cultures

S. Nanda, Chs. 5-7 (p. 71-106)

Week Seven (Grad Students): E. Blackwood, "Tombois in West Sumatra: Constructing Masculinity and Erotic Desire"

****Paper Bibliography Due****

10/15 ***Cross-Cultural Study of Sex and Sexuality***

Film: Guardians of the Flute

G. Herdt, "Rituals of Manhood: Male Initiation in Papua New Guinea" (p. 203-207)

E. Blackwood, "Women's Intimate Friendships and Other Affairs: An Ethnographic Overview" (p. 268-278)

L. Abu-Lughod, "Is There a Muslim Sexuality? Changing Constructions of Sexuality in Egyptian Bedouin Weddings" (p. 247-256)

SECTION FOUR – CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER, PERSONHOOD, AND THE BODY

10/17 ***Cultural Systems for Distinguishing Men and Women***

M. Ward, Ch. 6 (p. 145-167)

R. Watson, "The Named and the Nameless: Gender and Person in Chinese Society" (p. 207-219)

Week Eight (Grad Students): E. Lewin, "On the Outside Looking In: The Politics of Lesbian Motherhood"

10/22 ***Cultural Constructions of Gender and Personhood***

S. Lamb, "The Making and Unmaking of Persons: Gender and Body in Northeast India" (p. 230-240)

J. Urla and A. Swedlund, "Measuring Up to Barbie: Ideals of the Feminine Body in Popular Culture" (p.285-298)

H. Ragone, "Surrogate Motherhood: Rethinking Biological Models, Kinship, and Family" (p. 471-480)

10/24 ***Women's Roles in Healing and Spiritual Traditions***

M. Ward, Ch. 8 (p. 193-215)

K. McCarthy-Brown, "Mama Lola and the Ezilis: Themes of Mothering and Loving in Haitian Vodou" (p. 421-430)

J. McIntosh, "'Tradition' and Threat: Women's Obscenity in Giriana Funerary Rituals" (p. 408-421)

Week Nine (Grad Students): M. Hegland, "The Power Paradox in Muslim Women's Majales: Northwest Pakistani Women's Mourning Rituals as Sites of Contestation over Religious Politics, Ethnicity and Gender"

****Draft Paper Due****

SECTION FIVE – GENDERED REALITIES IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

10/29 ***Limits to Cultural Relativism:
Dealing with Violence in Women's Lives***

M. Ward, Ch. 9 (p. 217-240)

10/31 ***Case Studies of Violence Against Women***

E. Gruenbaum, "Female Genital Cutting: Culture and Controversy" (p. 481-494)

L. Stone and C. James, "Dowry, Bride-Burning and Female Power in India" (p. 310-320)

L. Zimmer-Tamakoshi, "'Wild Pigs and Dog Men': Rape and Domestic Violence as 'Women's Issues' in Papua New Guinea" (p. 550-564)

Week Ten (Grad Students): S. Helmreich and H. Paxson, "Sex on the Brain: *A Natural History of Rape* and the Dubious Doctrines of Evolutionary Psychology"

11/5 Women and Work in the Global World

M. Ward, Ch. 10 (p. 241-267)

M. Weismantel, "Cities of Women" (p. 120-133)

M. Cairoli, "Factory as Home and Family: Female Workers in the Moroccan Garment Industry"

M. Mills, "Consuming Desires, Contested Selves: Rural Women and Labor Migration in Thailand" (p. 536-549)

Film: *Four Years in Hell* (25 minutes)

11/7 Women, Development and the State

F. Babb, "Women and Work in a Postrevolutionary Society: Urban Cooperatives and the Informal Economy in Nicaragua"

M. Wilson-Moore, "Doing Their Homework: The Dilemma of Planning Women's Garden Programs in Bangladesh"

Week Eleven (Grad Students): A. Anagnost, "A Surfeit of Bodies: Population and the Rationality of the State in Post-Mao China"

11/12 **Exam Two**

11/14 Student Paper Presentations

Week Twelve (Grad Students): M. Rosaldo, "The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Feminism and Cross-Cultural Understanding"

11/19 Student Paper Presentations

11/21 No Class – Thanksgiving Break

Week Thirteen (Grad Students): E. Newton, "My Best Informant's Dress: The Erotic Equation in Fieldwork"

11/26 Student Paper Presentations

11/28 Student Paper Presentations

Week Fourteen (Grad Students): M. Mills, "From Nimble Fingers to Raised Fists: Women and Labor Activism in Globalizing Thailand"

****Final Paper Due – Monday, December 3rd by midnight****

**** Turn in electronically through Turnitin.com****