

Dept.: ANTH

Course No.: 230

Credits: 3

Title: Peoples of the Pacific Islands

Contact: Prof. Sally McBrearty

Content Area: CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism- International

Catalog Copy: ANTH 230. Peoples of the Pacific Islands. Either semester. Three credits.
Linnekin .

Survey of the indigenous societies and cultures of the Pacific Islands, from prehistoric to modern times. Topics include island environments, human settlement, modes of subsistence, political systems, ritual, gender relations, the effects of European colonization, and current struggles for indigenous rights.

Course Information:

- a. In this course students examine the diversity of native Pacific Islands societies and cultures and study their distribution and social development from prehistoric to modern times. The primary goal of the course is to familiarize students a) with the indigenous cultural lifeways of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, and b) with the effects of Western contact and colonization on those cultures. The format is primarily lecture, augmented by films, presentation of artifacts, class discussions, and group exercises.
- b. The requirements consist of a mid-term exam, a final exam, three to four quizzes, participation in class discussions, completion of exercises and brief assignments, and an annotated bibliography on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor. Required texts include a comprehensive general work on the Pacific Islands, two ethnographic case studies on indigenous cultures, and two monographs examining the social and economic problems of specific present-day Island populations.
- c. Topics include: Pacific Basin geography and physical environment, adaptive constraints of island living, prehistoric canoe voyaging, modes of subsistence, ritual and religion, comparative politics, gender ideologies, long-distance exchange networks, ceremonial exchange, Euroamerican contact and its effects, modern problems facing Pacific Islanders, nationalist and sovereignty movements, and transnational migration.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed:

1. Become articulate.
2. Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility.
3. Acquire critical judgment.
4. Acquire moral sensitivity.
5. Acquire awareness of their era and society.

6. Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience.
7. Acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge.

This course promotes the following goals of General Education: 6 (primarily); 2, 3, and 4 (equally); 1, 5.

1. To demonstrate competence in course content, students must be able to define and compare analytic as well as ethnographic concepts presented in class. Students must be able to compare differing theoretical perspectives (e.g., on the settlement of the Pacific), to explain relationships between social and cultural institutions (such as between gender ideology and ritual taboos), and to explain and illustrate the causes and effects of historical change in Pacific Island societies (such as the introduction of private property laws in Hawaii). There are no multiple-choice assessments. Evaluation tools require students to explain (most often in writing) and to give examples of ideas, similarities, differences, logical connections, and causal relations.

2. This course gives students a new perspective on a world region that most know little about. Most students have stereotypic ideas of Pacific Islanders. In this course they acquire objective knowledge that challenges common preconceptions about indigenous peoples. With anthropology's "cultural relativist" perspective, students gain understanding and appreciation of cultural ideologies and practices that are very foreign to our own. Students must be able to explain how these unfamiliar customs are part of a logical cultural system with its own frame of reference.

3. Firstly, students in this course acquire ethnographic and historical knowledge that refutes the popular stereotype of Pacific Islanders as "exotic primitives" living timelessly in tropical affluence. Secondly, through lecture presentations, readings, and exercises, students learn to analyze culture change and understand the historical roots of modern problems. Students must demonstrate knowledge of historical interactions between Euroamericans and Islanders. In the process, they learn to think critically about dominant assumptions, such as that Europeans brought "progress" and a "better" way of life to Pacific Islanders. Students learn to question the universal superiority and applicability of many Western institutions, such as property and marriage laws and mercantile capitalism, and to appreciate the interrelatedness of cultural institutions.

4. A major goal of the course is to teach students to suspend their own preconceptions and prejudices and to develop understanding and tolerance of other cultures, as well as empathy with indigenous peoples. Certainly the history of Western actions in the Pacific and the plight of many Island peoples today—the Hawaiians, for example—can hardly fail to provoke moral outrage. However, the course content also requires students to think about the complexity of moral judgments. Indigenous cultures are not idealized; traumatic rites of passage, brutality against women, and communal violence are part of the ethnographic record, as are the more admirable qualities of Pacific cultures.

5. Although the Pacific may seem very distant from the East Coast, the U.S. has and has had in the past heavy involvements in that region, from the annexation of Hawaii in 1898 through

World War II and the hydrogen bomb tests in Micronesia. Hawaii is one of the United States. American Samoa is a U.S. territory profoundly dependent on federal outlays. Pacific Islanders make up an increasingly mobile and visible immigrant group in the Pacific Basin and there are large Islander groups on the West Coast and in Utah. The latter portion of this course emphasizes the modern situations and problems of selected Pacific peoples from a North American *and* a global perspective, addressing such topics as nuclear testing in the Pacific, nationalist movements, alcoholism and suicide in Micronesia, and problems of diasporic communities.

6. As described above, the diversity of human culture and experience in the Pacific Islands makes up the primary content of the course and is integrated into every component of instruction and assessment.

CA4 Criteria:

1. Multiculturalism: varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values.
2. Emphasize that interpretive systems and/or social structures are cultural creations.
3. Similarities may exist among diverse groups.
4. Develop understanding of and sensitivity to issues involving human rights, migration.

1. As narrated in detail above, the primary objective of this course is to impart the diversity of social forms, practices, belief systems, and historical experiences within a major world geographic region and culture area, the Pacific Basin.

2. The cultural embeddedness of belief systems and social structures is an absolutely fundamental and integral teaching of every cultural anthropology course, including this one. The holistic quality of culture is imparted throughout this course and students must be able to articulate examples that demonstrate their understanding of this concept.

3. Since the inception of anthropology as a discipline, the Pacific has been an arena for research addressing the differences and similarities among Island societies. Students in this course must demonstrate their mastery of specific ethnographies, and their knowledge, in varying detail, of the historical and cultural relationships between the peoples of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Polynesia is emphasized as an excellent illustration of how societies with a common historical origin share cognate languages and similar cultural practices.

4. Readings and ethnographic examples presented in class document a wide range of injustices and violations of human rights in the Pacific, notably depopulation, land alienation, labor exploitation, racist exclusionary laws, military conquest, and the overthrow of native Island governments. Students must be able to demonstrate detailed knowledge of the historical and modern injustices emphasized in class.