

ELTE Faculty of Social Sciences
Cultural Anthropology MA
Short Descriptions of Compulsory Courses

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Course is built on the assumption that cultural anthropology, on one hand, is a discipline that defines itself based on its research subjects (the “primitives”, cultures outside of Europe, etc.), however, on the other hand, it can be regarded as an approach that is commonly used to analyze various social structures and cultural situations. The aim of the “Introduction” course is to demonstrate the potential application of cultural anthropological approach in social research; what cultural anthropology can communicate as “unusual” or unique.

Objective of the course is to familiarize students with the defining nature of cultural anthropology, its trends, specific methods and cultural anthropological theories developed in relation to culture in general and its elements (such as economy, social organization, religion, art, and other forms of consciousness, etc.); to help students recognize the world’s cultural diversity in order to develop sensitivity toward other cultures, prepare them to be able to identify and understand those, and be able to mediate the process of acceptance of social and cultural differences.

History of Cultural Anthropology – An Introduction

Course content: The birth of cultural anthropology, significant “armchair” anthropologists (classical evolutionism: Lewis Henry Morgan, Edward Burnett Tylor, James George Frazer, Emile Durkheim; the German-Austrian "Kulturkreis"-school; the British heliocentric diffusionism; Marcel Mauss; Robert Hertz, Arnold Van Gennep)

Anthropological Theories and Methods

General objective of the course is to introduce the history of development of cultural anthropological theories and methods to the students. Specific objective, in addition to a general, all-encompassing presentation, is to bring home to students the understanding of how theory and method “goes together” in the history of anthropology.

Content of "Anthropological Theories and Methods 1.":

Franz Boas and his “school” (Franz Boas, Alfred Louis Kroeber, Clyde Kluckhohn, Robert Harry Lowie, Edward Sapir, Benjamin Lee Whorf, Melville Jean Herskovits, Paul Radin, Ruth Fulton Benedict, Ralph Linton, Margaret Mead)

Content of "Anthropological Theories and Methods 2.":

British Social Anthropology (forerunner: Walter Baldwin Spencer and Frances James Gillen, the Torres-Straits expedition; British diffusionism; William Halse Rivers Rivers, Bronislaw Malinowski; Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown; Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard; Meyer Fortes; Max Gluckman; Daryll Forde; Raymond Firth; Edmund Leach)

Content of "Anthropological Theories and Methods 3.":

The main directions of cultural anthropology after World War II (neoevolucionizmus and cultural ecology, ecological materialism, ethno-science and cognitive anthropology, structuralism, symbolic and interpretive anthropology)

Content of "Anthropological Theories and Methods 4.":

Questions and discussions of cultural anthropology (the Oedipus-complex, the Castaneda debates; the Margaret Mead vs Derek Freeman controversy; the Philippine Tasaday hoax; the sociobiology debate; problem of translation / translatability; gender issue; "The odds of culture research": postmodern anthropology? etc.)

Content of "Anthropological Theories and Methods 5.":

Development of cultural anthropology in Hungary (Lajos Bíró, Emil Torday, Géza Róheim, Bódog Somló, Károly Polányi, Vilmos Diószegi, László Vajda, Edit Fél, Tamás Hofer, Mihály Sozán, Tibor Bodrogi, Lajos Boglár)

Fields of Anthropology Courses

Anthropology of Religion + seminar

Insight of major cultural anthropological approaches into religion as a socio-cultural system is being discussed during the semester. Due to the analysis of issues related to anthropology of religion, the course can be considered as an introduction and preparation for the final exam at the same time. The course contains some of the basic works of cultural anthropology, these writings and theories Religious systems, analyzed during the "Anthropology of Religion" course, as cultural-social systems, are traditional-ritual-cognitive integrators, representors, and are awareness raising, embedding agents at the same time.

The "Anthropology of Religion Seminar", with the help of cultural anthropology, explores the complex and interrelated issues of religion, ethnicity, "communitas", culture, and tradition as it applies the analytical approach of socio-historical, socio-cultural, ethnographic aspects of those. The seminar also aims to provide an insight into the meaning of religion, culture and identity in our region, and into the cultural anthropological approach and possible interpretation of those.

Anthropology of Economics + seminar

The aim of the Economic Anthropology course is to introduce students to the unique relationship of economic and social processes in tribal and non European societies, as well as examination of the non-commodity sectors of societies based on commodity economy. The course assumes a basic, secondary school level understanding of economic and social-historical concepts.

Issues to be discussed are as follows: the system of various production relations, i.e. economic-social and technical-economic relations; tributes and payments in the pre-capitalist systems; economic differences in distribution and exchange; forms and modes of exchange; credit, savings and primitive money; commodity in non-commodity producing societies; production in peasant societies; the main disciplines of consumption and surplus distribution. Examination of the various spheres of social and economic life: social-economic formations from a historical perspective.

Social Anthropology + seminar

Social anthropology can be defined as a science that studies, interprets, describes and explains the repetitive nature of relationship patterns occurring during social processes. It examines the continuity and volatility of established social frames and attempts to interpret the diverse and multifaceted nature of man's social existence. It focuses on the connections between the different aspects of humanity, and analyses cultural happenings through the wide lens of social existence. The course aims to introduce students to the findings and approaches of this discipline of study. There are no pre-requisites for this course. The Social Anthropology Seminar serves as a complement to the lectures in Social Anthropology.

Political Anthropology + seminar

The " Political Anthropology 1. and 2. (lecture and seminar) intends to introduce the diversity of political systems, and the anthropological research of authority, the space and movement of influence. Students will learn about the various human communities with different governmental systems and underlying ideologies, and symbols of ideologies, working through questions of legitimacy and representation.

Course content: Research Trends and schools; Typology of political systems (hordes, tribal societies, chieftainships, states); Development of theories of the state; Ideologies and legal systems; The power of symbolism and structure; Political rituals; Nationalism theories.

Anthropology of Aesthetics

The anthropology of aesthetics is dedicated to the study of art in different human groups, not only through the study of collections and descriptions of art, but also through field research. The aim of the course is the introduction and analysis of the "components" of art (cultural embeddedness, socio-economic and ideological contexts, symbolic transformation, aesthetic experience, creative playfulness etc.) among tribal and "civilized" societies with the help of examples

The courses content: Arts as a cultural category (aesthetic and function); Tribal art (ethno-aesthetics) and anthropology; Principle criteria: technology, tradition, creativity; Art and Context: Myths and rituals; Genres: graphic and plastic arts, verbal arts, music, dance, drama and body decoration; Old and New Art: examples from America, Africa, Australia and Europe; Contemporary art and anthropology: I. The roots; Contemporary art and anthropology: II. Search for Myths and ritualization

Anthropology of the Cultures of the World Courses

Anthropology of Africa

The objective of the course of „Anthropology of Africa“ is to introduce students to the traditional cultures of the continent and to highlight the main effects of modernization, while pointing out aspects of ethnic and regional differences.

Anthropology of America

The overall objective of the course "American Anthropology" is to introduce students to the native cultures of the Americas. It aims to present, beyond the archaeological periods and cultures, the various Indian peoples living today, their ethno-history and their contemporary life forms. It also takes upon the task of analyzing today's Indian, mestizo peasant cultures and the influence of African-American culture.

Anthropology of Australia and Oceania

The course "Anthropology of Oceania " aims to give a comprehensive description of Australia and the Pacific Islands, it's peoples and their cultures. Apart from presenting the concerning cultural anthropological theories, the course aim to introduce the related physical anthropological, linguistic, archaeological, historical and ecological questions.

Anthropology of Asia

The course "Anthropology of Asia“ aims to present the continent, through the presentation of various major Asian territories. Course content: territorial and cultural division of Asia; India, Indochina, Indonesia, Tibet, Mongolia, Siberia, China, Japan, Saudi Arabi.

Anthropology of Europe

Anthropology of Europe”, from a comprehensive comparative perspective, outlines the more significant specifics of the cultures of the continent, as it introduces the unfolding anthropological researches, their trends and directions, the opportunities and dilemmas of the anthropologist conducting research within his own culture, and the topics of the eminent current researches. The aim of the lectures is to present the social, cultural, ethnic, etc. approach to the problems.

Practice of Anthropology Courses

Research Related Ethical Issues in Cultural Anthropology

All anthropologists – whether applied or theoretical they may be – conducting fieldwork, find themselves in complex social situations, as their research deals with people in a variety of role relationships. The aim of “Research Related Ethical Issues in Cultural Anthropology” course is to raise students’ awareness of the anthropologist’s responsibility: The anthropologist must make carefully considered ethical decisions, and be prepared to clarify the assumptions, facts and issues those decisions are based upon.

Analyzing Research Strategies

Objective of the “Analyzing Research Strategies” course is to walk through students the process of developing appropriate research strategies in order to find answers to their research questions. Through examples from cultural anthropological academic writings, the course first presents some feasible research methods. Thereafter, discussion of students’ specific research ideas will follow.

Reading Anthropological Academic Writings

Aim of “Reading Anthropological Academic Writings” course is to deepen the acquired knowledge of cultural anthropological theories and methods, and various specific ideas through “close reading” method. During the course classic, canonical texts (eg. Emile Durkheim, Margaret Mead, Claude Levi-Strauss), as well as contemporary academic writings (eg. James Clifford, Benedict Anderson, Wolfgang Kaschuba) will be analyzed.

Techniques of Anthropological Fieldwork

The social science specific paradigms of cultural anthropology include the principle of cultural relativism, a holistic interpretation of cultures studied, and the participant observation approach. Accordingly, anthropologists actively participate in the daily life of the communities they study, as they explore the realities of its cultural-social meaning. The aim of the course is then to provide an insight into the epistemological (and its inseparable) research-methodological question of cultural anthropology. Therefore, during the course, students learn the specifics of the anthropological approach and methodology. At the end, we close the semester with a discussion of the social applicability of cultural anthropology.

Fieldwork-preparation

The course is designed to prepare students to carry out independent fieldwork. The student needs to find a community where, while conducting fieldwork, basic methodological techniques and possible interpretation of findings, reviewed and supplemented during the seminar, can be practiced. Group discussions of methodological techniques related to field experiences are part of the reflections on relevant issues. Accordingly, every two weeks course participants have to examine and research the issues discussed at the previous seminar in order to adequately fulfil the cultural anthropology major’s fieldwork requirements.

In accordance with their respective selected topics, in the tutorial system, students are individually consulted by the instructors, thus preparing them to their actual fieldwork.

Academic Thesis Seminar

Preparation of a Cultural Anthropology MA thesis is a long term process, during which the individualized and personalized attention of the instructors paid to the students becomes discernible. The student is free to choose the consultant out of the scope of instructors. Since the selection is the result of a longer – developed during the fieldwork – cooperation, consultants are usually chosen from the faculty instructors; however, lecturers with academic assessment can also be selected. The consultant helps to plan the fieldwork, to evaluate of the results, references academic literatures, also gives advice during the writing process. Framework of this is the Academic Thesis Seminar.

Fieldwork

Basic requirement of the science of cultural anthropology is a long-term fieldwork carried out by the researcher, which means spending a considerable time in the community studied, and analyzing the culture by interpreting the experiences related to the designated subject matters, examining empirical findings, and interpreting interviews. The specific method of cultural anthropology thus is the participant observation, meaning that the researcher participates as an observer in the daily life of the community.

Integral part of the cultural anthropology MA course is an 80 days (8 x 10 days) mandatory fieldwork. Fieldworks are coordinated by a team of instructors, using tutorial system, according to the student's choice of subject matter. Verification of the fieldwork completion happens by turning in the student's detailed fieldwork diary.

Elective Courses

Linguistic Anthropology

The "Linguistic Anthropology" course is designed to introduce to students one of the four major fields of anthropology, primary subject of which is the language; through concrete examples presents its history, key concepts, and application.

Medical Anthropology

"Medical Anthropology" examines how people of different cultures explain illnesses, how they justify the ways they treat those, the treatments they trust, furthermore, whom they turn to in case of illness. It also examines the correlation between those and the biological, psychological changes of the human body – both in health and in illness.

Ecological Anthropology

This advanced course builds on the knowledge students gained during the first year of studies; it introduces the history and natural science background of ecological anthropology, as well as its theories, using interdisciplinary approach, also the recent findings of national and international researches. Based on theoretical knowledge, it introduces the methodological problem of ecological anthropology, it places the people and their culture in the system of natural factors. Objective of the course is to help students to learn the theoretical, methodological, and adopt the practical foundations of ecological anthropology research.

Urban Anthropology

The "Urban Anthropology" course ventures into that particular sub-discipline of cultural anthropology which became independent during the '50s and '60s; it examines the social organizations of cities, the specific social relationships, the different social networks, and the social life of urbanites while it compares different historical and cultural contexts.

Visual Anthropology

Aim of the "Visual Anthropology" course is to provide a theoretical and conceptual foundation, and an introduction to the study of culture's visual dimension. Through international examples, it demonstrates the importance of independence from the traditions of European "image-concept", and how important visualization and visual storytelling using images are in various social areas of different cultures. Primary objective of the lecture series is to show students how much work it is to learn to see.