



DEPARTMENT Humanities and Social Sciences

COURSE OUTLINE - Winter 2026

AN2070(A3): Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology – 3 (3-0-0) 45 Hours for 15 Weeks

Northwestern Polytechnic acknowledges that our campuses are located on Treaty 8 territory, the ancestral and present-day home to many diverse First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. We are grateful to work, live and learn on the traditional territory of Duncan's First Nation, Horse Lake First Nation and Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation, who are the original caretakers of this land.

We acknowledge the history of this land and we are thankful for the opportunity to walk together in friendship, where we will encourage and promote positive change for present and future generations.

INSTRUCTOR: Matt Longstaffe

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OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays, 12:30 – 14:00

CALENDAR DESCRIPTION: The comparative study of human society and culture, particularly nonwestern communities, with special attention to the family, social structures, economic and political institutions, religion, and processes of change.

PREREQUISITE(S):

None

COREQUISITE(S):

None

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

Kenny and Smillie (2017) *Stories of Culture and Place: An Introduction to Anthropology*, 2nd Ed. University of Toronto Press.

Nathan (2005) *My Freshman Year: What a Professor Learned by Becoming a Student*. Penguin Books, Ltd.

DELIVERY MODE(S): On-Campus

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the use of the vocabulary and concepts of sociocultural anthropology.

- Apply critical thinking skills to access, evaluate, and interpret information to draw conclusions and shape arguments.
- Demonstrate a scholarly mindset open to different perspectives, acknowledge the provisional nature of knowledge, and identify the limits of research and understanding.
- Implement qualitative research, including participant observation.
- Express ideas clearly and effectively both orally and in writing.
- Act with honesty

TRANSFERABILITY:

Please consult the Alberta Transfer Guide for more information. You may check to ensure the transferability of this course at the Alberta Transfer Guide main page <http://www.transferalberta.alberta.ca>

**** For courses with alpha (letter) grading, a grade of D or D+ may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students are cautioned that it is their responsibility to contact the receiving institutions to ensure transferability**

EVALUATIONS:

Assessment	Weight
9 reading quizzes, 5 points each, for 45 points total	22.5%
Assignment, Pt. 1, for 35 points	17.5%
Assignment, Pt. 2, for 35 points	17.5%
Assignment, Pt. 3 (Presentations), for 25 points	12.5%
Assignment, Pt 4, for 60 points	30%
Total = 200 points	100%
Note: All points are weighted equally for 200 points total	

Reading Quizzes (9 reading quizzes at 5 points each for 45 points total)

You will be given 9 reading quizzes covering your syllabus and chapters in our textbook throughout the semester. Each quiz will consist of a small number of questions (multiple choice, matching, etc.) and are intended to encourage you to keep up with your readings. They are not worth a whole lot of points in the grand scheme of things but could mean the difference between one letter grade and the next; don't let them slip past you! **Reading Quizzes are to be completed on our myClass page, will open Mondays at 8 am of the week assigned, and close Sundays at 11:59 pm (see due dates on schedule).**

A Semester-Long Project... In Four Parts (155 points total)

As we discuss in class, the bread-and-butter of fieldwork in social and cultural anthropology is centred on the concept of participant observation, and perhaps the most fundamental product of this is the ethnography. While traditionally this has involved anthropologists studying cultures/societies other than their own, anthropologists may also engage in self-



ethnography, or the study of the researcher's own group. This project is intended to take you through the process of ethnographic research in four distinct parts.

Skills and learning objectives: In this assignment you will practice (de)familiarization, semistructured field observation, taking and organizing field notes, presentation skills, applying anthropological concepts and perspectives to data gathering, and comparative analysis.

Note: Do not take any photos. The use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of those you discuss is encouraged. Please do not provide real addresses, phone numbers, etc.

Part 1: Participant Observation (35 pts)

NO LESS THAN 3 TIMES, spend 30–60 minutes in a publicly accessible location (a space that is available to you as a member of the public, student, or worker, *not* one that is private, proprietary, or requires special permissions to be in and report about). Note that another class **would not** work for this assignment.

OR

ONE TIME, spend **AT LEAST** 90 minutes at a public event or special gathering (an event that is available to you as a member of the public, student, or worker, *not* one that is private, proprietary, or requires special permissions/payment to be in and report about). Note that another class **would not** work for this assignment.

In either case, a good space to do this would be at school, here, on the NWP campus.

Direct your attention to observing the space and the people, beings, and things around you. As you observe, take down notes of all you see and notice. While recording *everything* you observe, try to identify what things you might usually take for granted. If you're in a familiar space, challenge yourself to make the familiar strange, in other words, to write about things you take for granted as something culturally produced and not necessarily "right" or "natural" or "common sense." If you're in an unfamiliar setting, try to make sense of what is going on in terms of those who belong to it—that is, try to make the strange familiar. Write down descriptions that don't assume you know what something is or why something is done a particular way. Don't be afraid to include speculations in your notes.

Take into the field a notebook and writing instrument, computer, or phone (for recording personal voice memos; **DO NOT RECORD OTHERS**). Take also a mental "checklist" of socio-cultural features that can be observed in human social spaces. Such a list might include but is not limited to *language/gesture, sights and sound, ideologies, ways relations are structured or enacted, relational activities (human and non-human), how material cultural objects are part of or excluded from the space, rituals and performances, gendered signs and processes, racialized spatializations,*



social inclusions or exclusions, sexism, racism. Take detailed notes while you are doing this or wait until you are finished and write down your experience right away, so you don't forget. Write down everything you see, hear, feel, smell, taste, and or perceive in any other way.

On the date indicated in your schedule, I want you to turn in your typed-up notes. The final product for this part of the assignment should be 4-6 pages of typed field notes.

Part 2: Synthesis/Thick Description (35 pts)

For this part of the assignment, take your notes from Part One and look for themes. Perhaps you observed people making or consuming food. Perhaps your ethnography has a soundtrack. Maybe family life provides structure. Maybe practices shaping behaviour at work or school are apparent. Pick a theme and use it to turn your notes into a narrative; "a day (or three) in the life." Make sure to add context and explain where necessary. How are the things you describe typical or atypical? Imagine that somebody from OUTSIDE your culture is reading your work (put yourself in that etic or "outsider's" frame of mind as much as is possible). What things might you take for granted as normal? What makes you question?

I want you to turn in your narrative, organized as a series of fully realized paragraphs. Feel free to use headings and sub-headings to help give your ethnography structure. You should also include an introductory paragraph (introducing the context) and a concluding paragraph (summing up any observations that stand out as particularly significant/surprising to you). At this point, do not incorporate any outside sources/research. The final product for this part of the assignment should be a 6-8 **double-spaced** page (12 pt. font, 1500-2000 words) ethnography.

Part 3: Presentation (25 pts)

For this part of the assignment, take your write up from Part Two and turn it into a short presentation. There are several ways that you can go about this depending on your technical aptitude, comfort, and aesthetic choices. Perhaps you want to record a PowerPoint (or similar) presentation? You could also simply record yourself on your cell phone. Maybe you want to produce a more sophisticated video? You could also create a static academic poster (ask me for advice on this). Or, if you are up for it, you can choose to present live in class. Whatever you choose, you will be graded on the quality and clarity of your presentation. Recorded or live presentations should aim for 5-10 minutes of length. For a poster, you need to capture and present equivalent amounts of information (meaning you'll have to be creative).

All assignment parts are to be completed on our MyClass page and will close on their due date (as indicated on our schedule) at 11:59 pm.

Ethnography is the in-depth study of a single culture or society. Ethnology, on the other hand, is the comparative study of cultures or societies. Now that you are an expert in the former, you are going to try your hand at the latter. Your text by Rebekah Nathan (which you've been reading all semester, right?) will provide this comparison.

You're going to need to use a program like Microsoft Word for this one. For this part of the assignment, take your write up from Part Two; read over your synthesis and edit according to the feedback received. Then, use the colour highlighter function to highlight phrases or sentences that relate to concepts or processes we've studied in class.

Next, annotate your highlighted parts, here's how: Use the footnote function to put a footnote after those highlighted phrases or sentences. In those footnotes, (1) relate what you observed and highlighted to a concept or process we have discussed in class. (2) Explain what that anthropological concept or process is. (3) Identify where similar themes were addressed in *My Freshman Year*. FINALLY, (4) explain the similarities/differences observed (feel free to speculate based on your understanding of course content). Some of your footnotes will point to things that require that you reference multiple concepts and processes, this is just fine and indicates how social life is anthropologically complex.

The final product for this part of the assignment is this corrected and annotated synthesis. You must provide minimum of 20 annotations but see how many anthropological concepts and processes you can discover and point out! Whatever program you use for annotation, make sure that you can still see your annotations in the saved and submitted file.

Note that while the registrar's office will issue a scheduled exam time you DO NOT have a final exam in this class. Part 4 of this assignment is due and will close by 11:59 pm on the date scheduled by the registrar. I will let you know when this is.

GRADING CRITERIA:

Please note that most institutions will not accept your course for transfer credit IF your grade is less than C-.

Grading Chart

Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines
A+	4.0	95-100	C+	2.3	67-69
A	4.0	85-94	C	2.0	63-66
A-	3.7	80-84	C-	1.7	60-62

B+	3.3	77-79		D+	1.3	55-59
B	3.0	73-76		D	1.0	50-54
B-	2.7	70-72		F	0.0	00-49

COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:

Week	Date	Topic(s)	Reading(s)
Getting Started			
1.1	Jan 6	Introduction to the Course	Syllabus
Module 1: What is Anthropology			
1.2	Jan 8	What is anthropology What is a social science?	Chapter 1
Homework: Reading Quiz 1 – Due Sunday Jan 11, 11:59 PM			
2.1	Jan 13	History in context	Chapter 2
2.2	Jan 15		
Homework: Reading Quiz 2 – Due Sunday, Jan 18 11:59 PM			
Module 2: Topics in Social and Cultural Anthropology			
3.1	Jan 20	Culture shock	Chapter 3
3.2	Jan 22		
Homework: Reading Quiz 3 – Due Sunday, Jan 25 11:59 PM			
4.1	Jan 27	Making a living	Chapter 4
4.2	Jan 29		
Homework: Reading Quiz 4 – Due Sunday, Feb 1 11:59 PM			
5.1	Feb 3	Kinship and the social order	Chapter 5
5.2	Feb 5		
Homework: Reading Quiz 5 – Due Sunday, Feb 8 11:59 PM			
6.1	Feb 10	Symbol, myth, and meaning	Chapter 6
6.2	Feb 12		
Homework: Assignment, Pt. 1 – Due Sunday, Feb 15 11:59 PM			
7.1	Feb 17	Reading Break – No Classes	
7.2	Feb 19	Reading Break – No Classes	
8.1	Feb 24	Health, medicine, and society	Chapter 7
8.2	Feb 26		
Homework: Reading Quiz 6 – Due Sunday Mar 1, 11:59 PM			
9.1	Mar 3	Gender and social expectations	Chapter 8
9.2	Mar 5		
Homework: Reading Quiz 7 – Due Sunday, Mar 8 11:59 PM			
10.1	Mar 10	Race, science, and human diversity	Chapter 9

Week	Date	Topic(s)	Reading(s)
10.2	Mar 12		
Homework: Reading Quiz 8 – Due Sunday, Mar 15 11:59 PM			
11.1	Mar 17	The politics of culture	Chapter 10
11.2	Mar 19		
Homework: Assignment, Pt. 2 – Due Sunday, Mar 22 11:59 PM			
12.1	Mar 24	Anthropology, cultural change, and globalization	Chapter 11
12.2	Mar 26		
Homework: Reading Quiz 9 – Due Sunday Mar 29 11:59 PM			
Homework: Assignment, Pt. 3 (digital presentations) – Due Sunday Mar 29 11:59 PM			
Module 3: Wrap-Up and Student Presentations			
13.1	Mar 31	Student presentations (Assignment, Pt. 3)	None
13.2	Apr 2		
Homework: Reading Quiz 8 – Due Sunday Apr 5 11:59 PM			
14.1	Apr 7	Wrap-up	Conclusion
14.2	Apr 9		
Homework: Reading Quiz 9 – Due Sunday Apr 12 11:59 PM			
Final Exam – Date TBD			

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:

Late Assignment/Make-up Policy: You are expected to follow the schedule as posted and **late assignments will not be accepted, except with my permission.** Make note of the due dates (and as you see, there is a lot of flexibility to complete and submit the assignment, BEFORE the due date)

Attendance and Participation: Attendance will not be taken, and no part of your grade is directly tied to attendance/participation. You are paying good money for this class and committing a significant amount of time to it. To get the most for your money and effort, **attendance is strongly encouraged.**

Classroom Climate Expectations: To create and maintain a safe and productive learning environment in the classroom, standards of behaviours are expected as follows:

1. **Listen** attentively and TAKE NOTES.
2. **Communicate** clearly and actively when asking questions or during discussions.
3. **Be respectful** when asking questions/discussing topics with EVERYONE. This does not mean that you need to agree with all the views/opinions expressed but note that there is a difference between being critical or engaging in a productive conversation and being confrontational or abusive.
4. **Refrain** from excessive talking or use of technology for NONACADEMIC PURPOSES. You are supposed to be in class, so BE IN CLASS.

Use of Generative AI in Assignments and Exams: We all know that Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) can create pieces of writing and other creative outputs. These tools include ChatGPT, Claude, Microsoft Copilot, and so on. These tools are now with us, so it is important to learn how to use them responsibly. You may use AI tools to learn and practice concepts in this course but remember to use a critical eye to what it is telling you. However, you **may not** use AI to write your class assignments or exams for you. This course policy is designed to promote learning and development and help you reach the course learning

outcomes. You're here to learn and learning how to communicate ideas through writing is one of the most important parts of being a student.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:

Academic Misconduct will not be tolerated. For a more precise definition of academic misconduct and its consequences, refer to the Student Rights and Responsibilities policy available at <https://www.nwpolytech.ca/about/polytechnic-leadership/policies-directory>.

****Note:** all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.