

Anth 351: Family Organization and Kinship

Syllabus Kathleen Saunders

"The study of kinship is the study of what societies make of the relations between the sexes and generations."

— N. J. Allen in *Kinship and Family: An Anthropological Reader*, p. 221

Required Texts

Martin Ottenheimer, 2006. *The Anthropology of Kinship--An Introductory Text*. National Social Science Press.

Note: When you go to the Bookstore they will sell you a CDROM and a password with instructions to go to the website for this text. You must request a printed copy of the text at the website (no additional cost). Do this ASAP. In the meantime, you can read the assignments on line.

Course Description

This is an introductory course which considers the dynamics at work in the most primary of human interpersonal relationships --kinship. While all cultures have a system for recognizing kin and non-kin and degrees of relatedness, the specifics of those systems have great variability. After detailing the common (ideal) forms of kinship, we will explore kinship ethnographically as one aspect of a matrix which includes social, historical, economic, and ideological components. Marriage practices and gendered consequences of kinship systems will be explored.

Course Objectives

The objectives of this course are:

1. to introduce students to the variety of marriage and kinship systems practiced cross-culturally
2. to explicate the links between kinship practices and the historical, economic, and ideological contexts in which these practices are produced and reproduced
3. to provide students with a working vocabulary and diagramming skills necessary to critically read and author kinship materials
4. to acquaint students with multiple theoretical approaches used to analyze kinship and marriage systems

Course Format

This class will be a mixture of lecture, video, Power Point presentations, in-class exercises, and open discussion. You should always come to class prepared for active participation.

Requirements

1. Meaningful Participation

Class time will often be devoted to discussion of the assigned reading, either with the entire class or in small groups. Keeping current with the reading assignments is crucial for meaningful participation. If timely preparation seems lacking, the instructor may give "pop quizzes" as part of the participation evaluation. (Don't make me do it!)

Meaningful participation includes: attendance, preparation, and participation in group and class discussions and projects. Please note that in a class in which participation is central to learning:

-Simply "being there" is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition.

-Timely preparation, including notes and questions, is essential.

-Not all commentary is "meaningful."

-In the spirit of justice, students should monitor their own contributions to avoid "free-riding" (no contribution) or "dominating the floor" (more than one's share).

Every unexcused absence will affect your participation points. Four or more unexcused absences will

result in an F for the course. An unexcused absence during class presentations at the end of the quarter will lower your grade earned by a full letter grade.

II. Term Paper

You will write an ethnographic paper about one group's marriage practices and/or kinship system that is 8-10 pages in length. This is a research paper that requires proper research and documentation. You may choose any group not extensively profiled in our assigned texts. The last week of class will be devoted to student presentations of these ethnographic papers. You are not REQUIRED to create a Power Point presentation or to prepare other visual materials but you are welcome to do so. These materials often aid students in delivering a focused presentation.

III. Exams

You will have two midterm exams worth 100 points and a final exam worth 150 points. The midterms cover the course materials for that period. The final exam consists of two parts: 1. all the specialized vocabulary from the course and 2. an exercise in reading a kinship chart.

IV. Family Chart

You will prepare a kinship chart of your family that is three generations deep and answer questions regarding your kinship practices. Details for preparation will be posted on Blackboard.

Grading

Meaningful participation 25
Ethnographic paper 100
Presentation of paper 25
Kinship Chart and table 100
Exams 350
Total Points Possible 600
Letter grades assigned according to Western's scale.

Academic Honesty

Standards of academic honesty will be rigorously upheld. Consult your student handbook for WWU policies concerning academic honesty (<http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~osl/js/jsacdish.html>). As a rule of thumb, any five consecutive words not of the student's original composition must be cited and punctuated as a quote; any information previously unknown to the writer or not "common knowledge" must be cited as to the source.

Special Needs

WWU and your instructors are committed to equal opportunity and non-discrimination in all programs and activities. Requests for accommodation or assistance should be directed to the Office of Student Life, 650-3844. Students who have special needs to facilitate learning should make those needs known the first week of the term.

BLACKBOARD

Blackboard is Western Washington University's online system for course information and communication. The course syllabus, reading and assignment schedule, supplementary materials and reminders will be posted on Blackboard. You are responsible for all notices posted on Blackboard which is accessed through your My Western Account. Note that you will be automatically enrolled with the e-mail account assigned to you by Western. If you routinely use a different email account, have your Western account automatically forwarded so you don't miss breaking news. Check this account regularly.

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