

# Anthropology

*Chair:* Suzanne Morrissey  
Eunice L. Blavascunas (on Sabbatical  
2018-2019)  
Rachel L. George

Jason Pribilsky, *Chair, Division I*  
Charles F. McKhann  
Stanley Thayne

Known as the “holistic science of humankind,” anthropology attempts to understand sociocultural systems in the broadest of comparative perspectives. Anthropology seeks to examine the differences between the vast varieties of existing human societies and to explain their development from simplest beginnings to modern complexity. Archaeology and physical (biological) anthropology add a unique time depth to the discipline among the social sciences.

Generally, anthropology courses coded at the 200 level are ethnographic survey courses (i.e., courses about some particular culture area). Courses coded at the 300 level are theoretical-topical (i.e., aimed at particular theoretical issues). These courses are open to students of all levels.

A student who enters Whitman without prior college-level preparation in anthropology will have to complete 36 credits to fulfill the requirements for the anthropology major.

**Distribution:** Courses completed in anthropology apply to the social sciences and cultural pluralism (selected courses) distribution areas.

**Learning Goals:** Upon graduation, a student will be able to:

- **Major-Specific Areas of Knowledge**
  - Understand how anthropological theory has developed over time and how this changes perception of human social and cultural diversity.
  - Have a familiarity with all four sub-disciplines of anthropology and how each specialization contributes to an understanding of human social and cultural variability.
- **Critical Thinking**
  - Critically assess issues involving human physical and cultural evolution and appreciate how these contributed to the development of contemporary diversity across the globe.
  - Analyze central aspects universal to culture such as kinship, gender, ritual and religion, exchange, and language, and how such aspects vary across time and space.
- **Research**
  - Organize in-depth research on anthropological issues based on collected field data or literature searches, and creatively, expressively, clearly, and soundly write reports.
- **After College**
  - Develop a strong foundation for acceptance into graduate schools to continue towards a career in the field of anthropology.
- **Citizenship**
  - Bring broad perspectives to discussions outside of Whitman that deal with the state of the human condition, whether within the local community, the nation, or in global affairs.

**The Anthropology major:** A total of 36 credits in anthropology to include Anthropology 101, 201, 490 and 492 (or 498); plus 18 additional credits. Of those additional credits, students must take at least one course in each of the following categories: Ethnographic Skills (312, 317, 325, 337, or 339) and bio- and environmental materialities (259, 300, 304, 306, 328 or 360). Students in their final year majoring in anthropology must pass a senior assessment consisting of an oral defense and/or presentation of their senior project (or honors thesis).

**Honors in the major:** Students do not apply for admission to candidacy for honors. Students will be invited to honors candidacy based on achievement of the minimum Cumulative and Major GPAs specified in the faculty code (3.300 and 3.500, respectively). Students who wish to pursue honors must write a thesis that fulfills the requirements of thesis in anthropology as discussed in consultation with the thesis advisor and two other committee members. To earn honors in the major, a candidate must additionally achieve distinction on the oral examination and earn an A or A- on the thesis (as recorded in Anthropology 498). The Chair of the Anthropology Department will notify the Registrar of those students attaining Honors in Major Study no later than the beginning of the third week of April for



belonging determined? What are the politics of recognition? What are current challenges to the exercise of Indigenous sovereignty? These are a few of the questions and themes this course will address. While global in scope, we will focus particularly on the Columbia Plateau and Pacific Northwest. Distribution area: social sciences or cultural pluralism.

### **247 ST: Anthropology & Religion**

**Spring**

**Thayne**

**4 credits**

What is “religion” in the works of anthropologists? What is an anthropological approach to the study of religion? What might an anthropology of religion’s twin, “the secular,” look like? What about an anthropology of before religion? This course addresses and begins to answer these large questions. We begin with antecedents to the professional field of anthropology, the “proto-ethnographic” writings of early missionaries and explorers whose observations about Indigenous peoples were recorded for purposes of religious conversion and colonization. What is the relationship between these religious writings and the rise of the modern field of anthropology? (Are anthropologists just secularized missionaries?) A major focus of the class is on how anthropologists have generated knowledge and theory about “religion” through a study of Indigenous peoples. We will discuss the federal legislation known as NAGPRA (Native American Graves and Repatriation Act), which institutionalizes anthropological definitions of “religion” and profoundly impacts relationships between museums and Indigenous communities, including our very own Maxey Museum. Readings may also include ethnographies of Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and other religious communities. The course will thus be a selective overview of and a critical reflection on anthropological methods for the study of this thing called “religion.” May be taken for credit toward the Religion major or minor. Distribution area: social sciences.

### **257 Chinese Society and Culture**

**Not offered 2018-19**

**4 credits**

An introduction to modern Chinese society and culture, rural and urban, with an emphasis on enduring cultural practices and modern transformation. Using ethnographies and films, this course looks at changing ideas about cosmos, the individual, family, gender, social relations, ethnicity, politics, and the state from late imperial times to the present.

### **258 Peoples of the Tibeto-Burman Highlands**

**Not offered 2018-19**

**4 credits**

An introduction to the society and culture of the Tibetan, Yi, Naxi, Jingpo, and other peoples living in the region of southwest China, northern Myanmar (Burma), and Tibet. Studies in history, religion, politics, and social structure point out the differences as well as the similarities among these Tibeto-Burman peoples.

### **259 Culture, Environment and Development in the Andes**

**Not offered 2018-19**

**4 credits**

This course focuses on the intersection of two major concerns in global development—environmental sustainability and the self-determination of indigenous communities—as they play out in the Andes region of South America. Environmentally, this mountainous region is home to astounding biotic and geomorphological diversity and concentrations of major watersheds, glaciers, and complex forests. Culturally and politically, the Andes region also stands out as a locus of Latin America’s indigenous rights movement. This course asks a series of questions centered on understanding environmental issues and movements from the perspective of indigenous peoples, including: How are pressing environmental changes altering indigenous livelihoods and how are indigenous groups responding to these challenges? How do indigenous movement politics rooted in struggles for sovereignty and legal recognition intersect with global environmental concerns and social movements to address climate change, water resources, and biodiversity? How do approaches to development that take seriously nature-culture connections address issues of indigenous livelihoods and sustainability and in what ways do they fail? Readings will draw from anthropology, geography, global health, political theory, journalism, and history. This course builds on Anthropology 201, but it is not required. May be elected as Environmental Studies 259, but must be elected as Environmental Studies 259 to satisfy the interdisciplinary course requirement in environmental studies.

### **300 Malignant Cultures: Anthropologies of Cancer**

**Not offered 2018-19**

**4 credits**

Cancer – the uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells in the body – is the cause of nearly 13 percent of all deaths annually. (Over 12 million cancers are diagnosed each year with a corresponding 8 million deaths.) Because of its often unknown direct causes, and its association with suffering and the disfigurement of the human body, cancer is frequently described as a “dreaded” disease, the name itself serving as a metaphor for unchecked disorder and chaos. This course, blending a reading seminar with community-based research, will explore a variety of sociocultural dimensions of cancer, from the epidemiology and demographics of the disease, with a particular focus on how cancer maps on to social inequalities including race and ethnicity, to its cultural history – its rich metaphors, symbols and social connotations. Readings will explore cancer in the US as well as its rising incidence in the developing world. Drawing from medical anthropology, course themes will explore both the possibilities and limitations of an ethnographic approach to mine cancer’s meanings, with special attention placed on the perspective of sufferers and the sociocultural contexts in which the disease occurs. In the community-based research portion of the class, students will carry out their own ethnographic research and/or service-learning projects among different cancer communities in the Inland Northwest. Students will have the opportunity to explore issues such as survivorship, the intersection of cancer with poverty, race, ethnicity and gender/sexuality, cultural aspects of treatment, environmental justice, support groups and advocacy, and health activism. Assessment of student performance will be determined through short essays, class participation and leadership, and completion of a community ethnography project.

### **304 Anthropology of Complementary, Alternative and Integrative Medicine**

**Not offered 2018-19**

**4 credits**

Medical systems vary depending on time, space, place, available (and desired) resources, culturally held beliefs, politics, and socioeconomic circumstances. This course explores medical systems – combinations of healthcare philosophies and treatment modalities – from anthropological perspectives. In particular, students will: 1) study complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), a broad category of medical systems that includes Traditional Chinese Medicine, Naturopathy, Chiropractic, and Homeopathy; 2) consider the rising popularity of CAM in North America and how this has (or has not) affected healthcare policy and conventional practice; and, 3) examine who accesses CAM, in what forms, and for what conditions. Second, students will learn how CAM systems are integrated with biomedicine in what is called “integrative medicine” (IM), for diagnoses and treatment plans. Finally, the course will reflect on what anthropology can bring to the study of CAM/IM: how risks and efficacies of CAM therapies are measured and assessed; how patient-provider relationships shift when biomedical and CAM systems are integrated; how standards of practice and provider training and certification are evaluated; and how underserved populations attain and use CAM/IM.

### **306 Culture, Politics, Ecology**

**Not offered 2018-19**

**4 credits**

This seminar examines a range of approaches to the analysis of ecological and social processes, drawing on interpretations of different socio-ecological studies in anthropology and geography. Covers cultural ecology and political ecology. Topics include human/environment relations through the lens of gender, race, class, livelihoods, the topic of nature and nature conservation, local knowledge, resistance and resilience, environmental discourses, social movements and the connections between production and consumption. Students will gain an understanding of how hierarchies, privilege, status and power shape patterns of natural resource use; who and what causes environmental problems; and what the solutions might be. May be elected as Environmental Studies 306, but must be elected as Environmental Studies 306 to satisfy the interdisciplinary course requirement in environmental studies.

### **312 Ethnographic Film Studies**

**Not Offered 2018-19**

**4 credits**

An introduction to the history, theory, and practice of ethnographic film and video. The course is divided into two parts. Students view, read about, discuss, and review a series of classic and contemporary ethnographic films, while

simultaneously producing their own in small groups using resources from the college's Multimedia Development Lab. *Prerequisite:* Anthropology 201 or consent of instructor.

**313 Communism, Socialism, and the Environment**  
**Not offered 2018-19**

**4 credits**

In an age where many associate climate change and environmental destruction with capitalism, what can we learn from the history, ideology and practice of socialism and communism? Was communism uniformly destructive to the environment, marked by catastrophes like the Chernobyl meltdown or the nightmarish geoengineering of Three Gorges Dam in China? What are the unexpected environmental surprises or sustainable aspects of the communist experiment, inadvertent as well as purposeful? This course provides both political theory and case studies to examine what was state socialism, the Communist Party, the experience of living in a Communist country. The course will draw on materials from environmental history, post-socialist anthropology and political ecology to explore the lived realities and utopian projects of communism and socialism. Course draws examples from around the world, including eastern Europe, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Brazil and Tanzania. May be elected as Environmental Studies 313, but must be elected as Environmental Studies 313 to satisfy the social sciences course requirement in environmental studies.

**317 Language and Culture**

**Fall**

**George**

**4 credits**

Language is examined as a cultural system. The first half focuses on language *structure* and includes a discussion of signs, reference, meaning, and categories. The second half examines language *use* in socially situated contexts (pragmatics), and deals with problems of participant relations, poetic and discourse structure, and the analysis of myth and ritual as linguistic genres.

**318 History and Theory in Anthropology**

**Fall**

**Morrissey**

**4 credits**

The course will trace the development conceptually and historically of explanatory theory for sociocultural phenomena from the discipline's origins in classical thought up through the challenges of postmodernism and poststructuralism in the 1980s. "Schools" of thought such as Racism, Environmental Determinism, Marxism, Cultural Evolutionism, French Structuralism, cognitive science, cultural ecology, and symbolic and interpretative anthropology are analyzed comparatively to emphasize the contribution of each to an emergent synthetic theory of culture. Anthropology majors must take 318 prior to the start of their senior year. Anthropology 318 is a prerequisite for taking Anthropology 490. Three lectures per week. *Prerequisite:* eight hours of anthropology or consent of instructor.

**325 The Anthropology of New/Digital Media**

**Spring**

**George**

**4 credits**

In this course we will explore anthropological approaches to the ways in which people use new media to interact, play with language, and construct various identities in a wide range of political and cultural contexts. We will compare popular and scholarly discussions of media to each other and to our own observations of how real people behave online and in other digitally-mediated spaces. May be taken for credit toward the Film and Media Studies major.

**328 Medical Anthropology**

**Spring**

**Pribilsky**

**4 credits**

Medical anthropology looks at the interface between culture and health in all its forms across the spectrum of societies and cultures. A starting point for this course will be distinguishing physical "disease" from cultural understandings of "illness." We will then explore the ways worldviews, beliefs, and practices shape both the incidence of disease and the experience of illness. Topics may include the relationship among biology, ecological processes and culture, ethnomedicine, trance and healing, political economic determinants of sickness, cultural assumptions of biomedicine, cross-cultural mental disorders, "culture bound illnesses," gender and health, and

cultural conceptions of the body. Throughout the course, special attention is paid to the possibilities of ethnographic fieldwork for the critical study of health.

**337 Regional Ethnographic Fieldwork: Researching and Writing Culture**  
**Not offered 2018-19** **4 credits**

This course, run as a workshop-seminar, introduces students to the ins and outs of ethnographic research, from research design to ethics and writing. Focused around a different research topic or problem in eastern Washington chosen each year the course is taught (e.g., housing, health care for the poor and uninsured, food security), students will devise an ethnographic research project amendable to the employment of a variety of ethnographic methods. Methods may include mapping, linguistic/discourse analysis, focused observation, ethnographic interviewing, and focus groups. Technical readings on ethnographic methods, ethics, and writing will be supplemented with critical readings from anthropology and related fields germane to the particular year's topic of study. Assignments will include short papers and a final ethnographic report. *Prerequisite:* Anthropology 201 or consent of instructor.

**339 Ethnographic Research and Writing**  
**Not offered 2018-19** **4 credits**

This course is a hands-on workshop in how to conduct ethnographic research and present findings in the genre of ethnographic writing. We will look at how cultural anthropologists and other ethnographers propose research questions and designs and execute ethnographic projects. Readings will combine straightforward discussions of the technical aspects of specific methods with reflections on the ethnographic process drawn from ethnographic writings themselves, fieldwork reflections, and fictionalized accounts of the fieldwork experience.

**347 Special Topics in Anthropology**  
**1-4 credits**

Any current offerings follow.

**349 Urban Life: Readings in the Anthropology of Cities**  
**Not offered 2018-19** **4 credits**

An upper-level introduction to the subfield of urban anthropology using ethnographic examples that explore the form and quality of urban life in the United States, Europe, and selected non-Western cultures. Case studies will be read to assess the varying theories and methods applied in anthropological analyses of cities, their significance in the broader field of urban studies, and the provocative themes that emerge such as social networks, violence, health and disease, and homelessness. The course examines contemporary U.S. "inner city" problems, rapidly urbanizing cities in the developing world, and trends in today's emerging "global cities." May be elected for credit toward the Race and Ethnic Studies major.

**358 Social Bodies, Diverse Identities: the Anthropology of Sex and Gender**  
**Spring** **Morrissey** **4 credits**

Sex and gender have been framing, analytical categories throughout the history of anthropology. This course explores why sex and gender are invaluable to understanding the human condition. Yet, "sex" and "gender" are not stagnant categories. Instead, they vary across time, place and researcher. Thus, while considering cross-cultural expressions of sex and gender in the ethnographic record, this course is also designed to examine theoretical developments in the field. May be taken as Gender Studies 358. *Recommended Prerequisites:* Anthropology 201 or Gender Studies 100.

**360 The Cultural Politics of Science**  
**Not offered 2018-19** **4 credits**

An upper-level introduction to the widening field known as science and technology studies (STS). Interdisciplinary in scope, this course primarily draws on ethnographic attempts to understand how science and technology shape human lives and livelihoods and how society and culture, in turn, shape the development of science and technology. Throughout the course we will be particularly concerned with ways that scientific visions and projects, broad in

scope, articulate, mirror, distort, and shape hierarchies based on such categories as gender, race, class, development, definitions of citizenship, understandings of nature, the production of knowledge, and global capitalism. Topics may include race-based pharmaceuticals, climate debates and “natural” disasters, genomics, politicized archaeology, science in postcolonial contexts, DNA fingerprinting, clinical trials, cyborgs, nuclear weapons production, and human/nonhuman relationships. May be elected as Environmental Studies 362, but must be elected as Environmental Studies 362 to satisfy the interdisciplinary course requirement in environmental studies.

#### **417 Independent Study in Anthropology**

**Fall, Spring**

**Staff**

**1-4 credits**

For advanced students only. The student will undertake readings in depth in an area of theory or content of his or her own choice. *Prerequisite:* consent of instructor.

#### **490 Senior Seminar**

**Fall**

**George, Pribilsky**

**4 credits**

The goal of this course is to help students further explore the role of social theory and its relevance to the development of anthropological research. In a seminar setting, students will read and critically discuss a number of contemporary anthropological monographs possessing exemplary theoretical, methodological, and empirical sophistication. Short written assignments will supplement in-class discussion. As a secondary goal, students will craft and workshop a proposal for their own capstone research project. Required of, and only open to, senior anthropology majors.

#### **492 Senior Project**

**Spring**

**George, Pribilsky**

**2 credits**

Senior major students create a substantial original capstone project based on the previous semester plan.

#### **498 Honors Thesis/Project**

**Spring**

**Staff**

**2 credits**

Designed to further independent research leading to the preparation of an undergraduate honors thesis/project in anthropology. Required of and limited to senior honors candidates in anthropology. *Prerequisite:* admission to honors candidacy.