ANTHROPOLOGY

Chair, Professor Mary Beth Mills
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Anthropology pursues empirically grounded, critical analysis in order to understand cultural systems, illuminate social worlds, and lovingly question how these shape and are shaped by lived experience. As such, anthropology is a critique for the purpose of building knowledge, enacting kindness, pursuing mutuality, stretching our imaginations, and creating a better future. The program at Colby offers an introduction to cultural anthropology’s field methods, scope, and critical comparative analysis. Students receive training in anthropological theory and methodology and in the discipline’s engagement in solving social problems. The department offers a major and a minor in anthropology.

Requirements for the Major in Anthropology

Ten courses, including: Anthropology 112, 313, 333, and one advanced seminar at the 400 level taken in the second semester of the senior year; one culture area course normally selected from courses designated as such in the course description (consult your advisor for appropriate selections in any given semester); five elective courses, including at least two at the 300 level or equivalent. In addition to Anthropology 112, a maximum of one other anthropology course taught at the 100 level may be counted toward the major.

The point scale for retention of the major applies to all courses offered toward the major. No courses for the major may be taken satisfactory/unsatisfactory.

Honors in Anthropology

Seniors majoring in anthropology may apply for the honors program during the first week of the fall semester. In addition to receiving department approval, the student must have a 3.25 overall grade point average and a 3.60 grade point average in the major. The program involves independent research conducted in Anthropology 483, 484. Honors normally will be taken for six to eight credits over two semesters, and the final product will be a thesis of 50 to 70 pages of superior quality.

Requirements for the Minor in Anthropology

Six courses, including Anthropology 112; one culture area course normally selected from courses designated as such in the course description (consult your advisor for appropriate selections in any given semester); and four additional courses in anthropology, two of which must be at the 300 or 400 level. In addition to Anthropology 112, a maximum of one other anthropology course taught at the 100 level may be counted toward the minor.

The point scale for retention of the minor applies to all courses offered toward the minor. No courses for the minor may be taken satisfactory/unsatisfactory.

Attention is called to the major in classical civilization-anthropology (requirements are listed in the “Classics” section of the catalogue).

Note: Anthropology 112 fulfills both the social sciences area (S) and the diversity (I) requirements. Subsequent courses, requiring 112 as prerequisite, do not carry those designations.

Course Offerings

AY112fs Cultural Anthropology Introduction to the study of human societies and cultures through the concepts and methods of anthropology. Course material will (a) explore the great diversity of human social and cultural arrangements through the investigation of cultural communities around the world and the distinct ways their members experience and understand their lives and (b) investigate the larger historical, political, economic, and symbolic frameworks that shape contemporary human societies and cross-cultural interactions worldwide. Assignments emphasize clarity, concision, and coherence of written and oral arguments, as well as control over and understanding of course content. Four credit hours. S, I. FACULTY

AY119j The Anthropology of Utopias Examines classic utopic and dystopic literature, philosophy, anthropology, art, and film from Plato to the present. Utopian literature involves anthropological reflection about the range of possibilities for human community and related anthropological themes of human social and cultural variability, conflict, and cooperation. Critically explores different utopian and dystopian discourses as vehicles for thinking about a world in crisis and its possible futures, as well as the effects these have on contemporary debates about politics and governance, citizenship, new technologies, media, family, and more. Three credit hours. S. HRISKOS

AY211s Human Rights and Social Justice in Global Perspective Listed as Global Studies 211. Three credit hours. W2.
AY221j  Of Beasts, Pets, and Wildlife: What Animals Mean to Humans  Explores human-animal relations in cross-cultural and historical perspective to view the centrality of animals to human existence. Considers the social, symbolic, and economic uses of animals in a variety of contexts, from cockfighting in Bali to the corporate culture of Sea World to central Maine farms. Examines the history and philosophies of the animal rights movement from the anti-vivisection campaigns of 19th-century England to contemporary animal rights protests in the United States. Concludes with an analysis of human animality and animal subjectivity to arrive at a deeper understanding of both human and non-human animals. Previously offered as AY297J (Jan Plan 2018). Prerequisite: Anthropology 112 or Philosophy 113 or 114.  Three credit hours.  MENAIR

[AY222]  Maine’s Musical Soundscapes: Ethnography of Maine  Listed as Music 222.  Four credit hours.  A.

[AY224]  Border Crossers and New Neighbors: Immigrants in Maine  This ethnographic humanities lab introduces students to immigrant experiences through readings and engagement with immigrant communities in Maine. We begin with intensive readings to gain expertise about different aspects of immigrant experiences, including the reasons for mobility, employment, family, religion, and identity. Background preparation enables students to work with preselected immigrant and immigrant support organizations to learn about their experiences and to collaborate in documentary production. Requires significant travel and student initiative. Part of the two-course cluster, Integrated Studies 224, "Global Maine."  Four credit hours.  S, U.

AY231s  Caribbean Cultures  Considers Caribbean people, places, products, and the webs of domination and resistance that formed and transformed the region and its diasporas. Ethnographies, films, food, music, memoir, and other texts tackle topics like empire building and dismantling; colonialism and postcolonialism; decolonization and displacement; development and underdevelopment; commodification and consumption; labor, revolution, and liberation. Cross-cultural and cross-temporal navigations develop an anthro-historical sensibility about the Caribbean’s pivotal place in the world. Also listed as African-American Studies 231. Fulfills anthropology’s culture area requirement. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112 or American Studies 276.  Four credit hours.  I.  BHIMULL

AY232f  Oral History Ethnographic Research Lab: Waterville Main Street  In this ethnographic research lab, students will explore the theory and practice of oral history. They will read from a range of sources about the challenges of producing oral history, and they will conduct both archival research and produce oral histories examining the history of Waterville Main Street using Colby’s Special Collections and with Waterville residents. Drawing on Digital Maine’s previous projects (including American Studies 221, "Mapping Waterville"), the class will produce a collective project presenting oral histories of Waterville Main Street. The Presence of the Past humanities lab. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112.  Two credit hours.  TATE

AY236f  Illegal Drugs, Law, and the State  Drawing on legal and political anthropology, we will examine the legal regimes and cultures of control that target the commerce and consumption of illegal drugs. We will consider the evolution of these policies, their role in the construction of the state, and their impact in a variety of historical moments and social worlds. Case studies will include Prohibition, cocaine, medical and recreational use of marijuana, and alternative forms of political power facilitated by the drug trade, with a special focus on Latin America. Students will gain critical reading and presentation skills and will refine their writing and research skills through the production of an original case-study research project. Fulfills anthropology's culture area requirement. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112.  Four credit hours.  TATE

[AY242]  Anthropology of Latin America: City Life  An introduction to anthropological research on Latin America, with a particular focus on contemporary urban life. Cities attract migrants seeking new forms of communal life, educational and economic opportunities, and escape from war. We will examine the transformation of gender roles, political participation, and cultural production. Goals include learning to apply an anthropological lens to discussions of and gaining a basic knowledge of issues facing contemporary Latin America. Students will gain critical reading and discussion-facilitation skills and will refine writing skills through the production of review essays. Fulfills anthropology's culture area requirement. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112.  Four credit hours.

[AY243]  Globalization, Democracy, and Political Transformation in Bolivia  Students will learn a range of perspectives on recent Bolivian history; gain the ability to analyze Bolivian politics, economy, and social relations; and identify and trace critical forms of interconnection between Bolivia and contemporary global systems. Based in Cochabamba, students will live with host families, hear from analysts and activists, gain an understanding of anthropological vocabulary and concepts, conduct original research, and reflect critically on international fieldwork. Scholarships are available through the Latin American Studies Program. Prerequisite: One year of college Spanish or equivalent, demonstrated interested in Latin America, and instructor permission.  Three credit hours.  S, I.

AY244f  Anthropology of Religion  Introduces students to the anthropological study of religion, focusing on the lived experience of religion in a variety of historical, social, and cultural contexts. Examines religious symbols, ritual, possession, magic, and the relationship between religion and modernity. Cross-cultural investigation of diverse religious phenomena through ethnographic case studies, such as witchcraft in Sudan, voodoo in Brooklyn, and women's participation in the mosque movement in Egypt. Students will use concepts learned in class to design and carry out an independent research project on a relevant topic of their choosing. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112.
[AY246]  Religion and Everyday Life in Muslim Societies  Introduces students to the anthropology of religious practice in Muslim societies. We will examine the roles of a diverse set of religious values, beliefs, and rituals in the daily lives of Muslim men and women around the world. We will also investigate how social processes like the Islamic revival, the war on terror, migration, and globalization shape, and are shaped by, ordinary Muslims’ religiosity. Students will read work by ethnographers, journalists, novelists, and activists to examine these issues in places like Lebanon, Pakistan, Indonesia, France, and the United States. Fulfills anthropology's culture area requirement. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112.  Four credit hours.  I.

[AY247]  Colombian Politics through Film  Examines contemporary Colombian political culture through readings and contemporary Colombian feature films. Themes include political identity and belonging, insurgencies and guerrilla warfare, rural economies and urban development, drug trafficking and illegal economies, discrimination, memory, and social conflict. Students will learn a range of perspectives on recent Colombian history, politics, economy, and social relations. Through readings, films, and discussion, students will develop their anthropological thinking and critical analysis skills, and enhance their abilities to express complex ideas and to support their arguments using concrete evidence in both written and oral modes of communication. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112.  Three credit hours.

[AY248]  Anthropological Perspective on Science and Religion  Cross-cultural research ranging from ethnographies of in vitro fertilization in Ecuador to religious healing in Madagascar to fetal personhood in the United States introduces students to new cultural perspectives on the relationship of science and religion. Ongoing written and oral discussion of case studies will enable students to gain facility with key theoretical models used to study the cultural politics of science and technology as well as the moral dilemmas of scientific applications. Students will apply these analytical concepts in a final research project on a topic of their own selection. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112.  Four credit hours.

[AY251]  Global Displacement, Understanding Refugees and Refugee Policy  Listed as Global Studies 251.  Four credit hours.

[AY252]  Language in Culture and Society  Students will gain facility with key theoretical models and anthropological concepts used in linguistic anthropology, including discourse analysis, markedness theory, and language ideologies. Written and oral discussion of critical case studies will enable students to engage relevant conceptual tools and apply these to specific ethnographic materials. Students will learn to apply such insights to the study of the interrelationship of language and the social difference of race, gender, and class; linguistic nationalism and standardization; religious language; speech communities; and cross-cultural differences in language socialization. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112.  Four credit hours.

AY253f  Goods, Gifts, and Globalizing Consumers  Listed as Global Studies 253. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112.  Four credit hours.  HALVORSON

[AY255]  Global Health: Critical Perspectives on Health, Care, and Policy  Listed as Global Studies 255.  Four credit hours.

[AY256f]  Land, Food, Culture, and Power  An examination of cultural and political aspects of land and other resource use in contexts of culture contact and/or social change, drawing from a variety of ethnographic examples in different parts of the world. A focus on varied subsistence and resource management systems explores how local forms of livelihood have been incorporated into and challenged by national and global economic relations and structures through processes of colonization and the growth of transnational capitalism. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112.  Four credit hours.  MILLS

[AY258]  Anthropology, History, Memory  Anthropologists have depicted cultural systems as timeless, paying limited attention to how historical experiences produce, and how they are shaped by, everyday beliefs and actions. Examines the significance of history for anthropological understanding and vice versa. Investigates how different cultures construct the past and how the past shapes everyday lives, our own and others. Explores sites such as myths, monuments, bodies, and archives. Questions what is the past? How is it present? How do societies remember? How do they forget? Topics include technology, time, travel, commemoration, war. Formerly offered as Anthropology 298B. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112 or American Studies 276 or a 100-level history course.  Four credit hours.

[AY259]  Reading Ethnography  The ethnographic genre is unique to anthropology. Through focused reading and discussion of four to five ethnographies grouped around a particular theme, students will develop analytic and critical reading skills. Each semester will offer a different theme, such as biotechnology, mobility, and auto-ethnography. We will focus on the form and genre of the assigned ethnographies, engage in close textual analysis, and read comparatively. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112.  Two credit hours.

AY262s Music in Life, Music as Culture: Introduction to Ethnomusicology Listed as Music 262. Four credit hours. A, I. ZELENSKY

AY268f Politics of Satire and Humor in Modern China Listed as East Asian Studies 268. Fulfills anthropology's culture area requirement. Four credit hours. S, I. ZHANG


AY277s Culture of Cuteness: Japanese Women (in English) Listed as East Asian Studies 277. Fulfills anthropology's culture area requirement. Four credit hours. S, D, I. ABE

[AY278] Language and Gender Listed as East Asian Studies 277. Four credit hours. S, I. ZHANG

AY297f Gender Ideologies in Discourse Explores how gender and sexuality are mediated in discourse and interaction. We will consider how language behavior articulates gender identity as well as race, class, and social affiliation in a variety of sociocultural contexts. We will attend to gender and sexuality as they are explicitly negotiated and contested, as well as how they are presupposed in everyday interactions in homes, schools, workplaces, and media representations. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112. Four credit hours. MENAIR

AY298f Cultural Accounting of Business and Work An intellectual opportunity to examine business and work as part of culture. We focus on the motives and methods of business with readings from Veblen, Weber, Marx, and Graeber as well as contemporary business textbooks. Students will reflect on people's lived experiences of markets and work, the culture of modern individualism, and the precarity of work in the 21st century. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112. Four credit hours. MENAIR

AY2XXCs Photography and Anthropology Four credit hours. TATE

AY313f Researching Cultural Diversity Focus on ethnography as both the central research strategy of anthropologists and the written text produced by such research. Examines anthropological methods of data collection and ethnographic writing as these encompass not only the discipline's historical focus on localized communities but also contemporary understandings of connections to global processes, the analysis of complex inequalities, and a reflexive and engaged relationship with the human world. Explores practical strategies for conducting ethnographic research, including interviewing, observation, and other modes of qualitative data collection; the ethical issues presented by such research; and the application of analytical and theoretical models. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112, a 200-level anthropology course, a W1 course, and sophomore standing. Four credit hours. STROHL

AY316s Religion and Social Change in Contemporary Africa Listed as Global Studies 316. Four credit hours. HALVORSON

AY333f Contemporary Theory An analysis of the contemporary state of cultural anthropology through the investigation of contemporary theoretical approaches of central importance to the discipline. Examination of key theoretical concepts and their relevance for designing research questions, generating ethnographic perspectives, and building anthropological knowledge. Special attention to political economy, symbolic anthropology, poststructuralism, reflexive anthropology, postmodernism, and feminist and postcolonial anthropology. Assignments include both written and oral modes of analysis; strong emphasis on discussion and collaborative debate. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112, a 200- or 300-level anthropology course, a W1 course, and junior or senior standing. Four credit hours. BHIMULL

AY339f Asian Pacific Modernities Dramatic changes, particularly in the latter half of the 20th century, have transformed social and cultural expectations throughout the Asia Pacific region. Across Asia, everyday life is profoundly shaped by processes of globalization and powerful discourses of modernity. What does it require to make oneself a modern citizen in Thailand, Japan, China, or the Philippines? How do people live, shop, and entertain themselves on a daily basis? Through case studies and independent research, students explore the region's dynamic social and cultural transformations, with particular emphasis on East and Southeast Asia. Fulfills anthropology's culture area requirement. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112. Four credit hours. MILLS

AY341s Culture, Mobility, Identity: Encounters in the African Diaspora Use of text, film, food, and music to examine how African and African-descended people made and remade the modern world. Surveys how past and present cultural practices dialogically shaped the formation, transformation, and flows of the diaspora. Attention to the dynamics of circulation, contact, exchange, and estrangement facilitates travels through the Afro-Atlantic world. Inquiry into archives and other sites of memory enables consideration of the scale, scope, and impact of black action and imagination. Fulfills anthropology's culture area requirement. Prerequisite: Anthropology 112 or American

Credit hours.
AY344f  Black Radical Imaginations  A seminar about the complex history of black radical imagination. Explores how black people have long used imagination as a strategy for survival, resistance, emancipation, liberation, and to create worlds of joy and love. It is concerned with black intellectual activism in the African diaspora and examines a range of cultural movements against racialized forms of oppression, including black surrealism and Afrofuturism. The Presence of the Past humanities theme course. Prerequisite:  American Studies 276 or Anthropology 112.  Four credit hours.  BHIMULL

[AY352]  Global Activism: From Socialist Internationalism to Today  Listed as Global Studies 352.  Four credit hours.  S.

[AY353]  Globalization and Human Rights in China  Listed as East Asian Studies 353. Fulfills anthropology's culture area requirement.  Four credit hours.  S.

AY355s  Aging and Public Policy in East Asia  Listed as East Asian Studies 355.  Four credit hours.  S, I.  ZHANG

[AY361]  Militaries, Militarization, and War  Examines the ways in which military conflict and institutions shape and are shaped by cultural, economic, and political forces in contemporary societies, especially in the Americas. Topics include the role of military service in creating and reinforcing gender norms, citizenship, and national identities; the ways in which war and militarized violence are experienced and commemorated; and ongoing controversy over counterinsurgency, internal defense, and modern forms of warfare. Students will develop their ethnographic skills through research and presentations. Formerly offered as Anthropology 398B. Prerequisite:  Anthropology 112.  Four credit hours.  S.

AY363s  Secrecy and Power  This seminar examines the use of secrecy in political, religious, and social contexts. Students will engage with theoretical, ethnographic, and historical texts to trace the development of key analytical, methodological, and ethical issues concerning the anthropological study of concealment. Topics will vary according to student interest but may include transparency, surveillance, publicity, privacy, passing, argots, codes and ciphers, dissimulation, esotericism, and epistemology. Students will complete an independent research project on the use of secrecy in a historical or social context of their choosing. Prerequisite:  Anthropology 112.  Four credit hours.  I.  STROHL

AY365f  Space, Place, and Belonging  Examines the origins of human claims to belonging in particular places and landscapes. We consider embodied space, as well as how place produces and is produced by gender, race, and other social identities. Our analysis spans spatial scales, with a particular focus on the Americas. We examine the social processes of community formation, enabling connection even as they generate exclusions and boundaries; the infrastructures of place and community, their material deployment and how they enable particular forms of belonging; and how mobility in the contemporary moment contributes to the emergence of new identities as well vulnerabilities.  Four credit hours.  TATE

[AY373]  The Anthropology of Gender and Sexuality  Gender and sexuality represent fundamental categories of human social and cultural experience; in every human society, understandings about gender and sexuality constitute powerful aspects of individual identity that shape and are shaped by key aspects of social relations and cultural belief. Yet specific beliefs and social structures vary tremendously across cultures. An investigation of the varied ethnography of gender and sexuality as well as important theoretical concerns: how meanings are attached to the human body, production and reproduction of gender hierarchies, and processes by which gender and sexual meanings (and associated social forms) may be transformed or contested in societies. Prerequisite:  Anthropology 112 and a 200-level or higher anthropology course.  Four credit hours.  U.

[AY374]  Public Anthropology  An exploration of innovative ways in which anthropology is used for proactive, public engagement in policy implementation and transformative social action. We review the history of disciplinary efforts at public engagement and experiment with our own approaches to engagement using ethnography, cultural critique, and collaborative methodologies. Students will develop oral and written communication skills through individual and collaborative projects, experiment with different ethnographic genres, and assess the effectiveness of different approaches to public engagement. Prerequisite:  Anthropology 112.  Four credit hours.

[AY421]  Anthropology of Creativity  Creativity is a vital part of cultural life and social transformation. Anthropologists have long traced its meanings and manifestations across different historical and cultural contexts, from ethnographies of the extraordinary and collective to the study of the ordinary and individual. We will explore a range of topics relevant to the critical investigation of human capacities for and responses to possibility, destruction, spontaneity, empathy, radical imagination, structural oppression, and social emancipation. Creative expressions considered include poetry, dance, music, social media, experimental ethnography, Afrofuturism, and other aesthetic realms. Prerequisite:  Anthropology 112, and 313 or 333 (either may be taken concurrently).  Four credit hours.

Four credit hours.

AY455s Intervention: The Ethics and Politics of Humanitarianism  Listed as Global Studies 455.  

Four credit hours.  

S. HALVORSON

AY457f Insurgent Mobility Lab: Migrants, Activists, the Balkan Route  Listed as Global Studies 457.  

Four credit hours.  

S, I. RAZSA

AY464s Anthropology of Food  Food is essential to human life. Yet the significance of food for human being extends far beyond calories and nutrition. What counts as food is deeply shaped by cultural meanings and associations. Food can signify distinctive cultural identities; it can mark proud or shameful histories and global connections; it can point to (or obscure) deeply embedded structures of power and relations of inequality and privilege, both within and across diverse societies. Food offers rich fields for anthropological theorizing and fruitful avenues for extending critical research skills. Course work culminates in an independent, original research project and oral presentation. 

Prerequisite: Anthropology 112, and 313 or 333 (either may be taken concurrently), and junior or higher standing.  

Four credit hours.  

MILLS

[AY466] Technocultures  Through intensive ethnographic reading and discussion, we will address a set of questions: How have recent technological innovations shaped personhood and social life? How have infrastructural technologies like hydraulics and electrical grids shaped citizenship and democracy? How have reproductive technologies altered understandings of the body and the family? How have algorithmic technologies changed food production, public education, the financial sector, and border security? How have recent technological innovations impacted inequality, racism, and other forms of social difference? And how have techno-fantasies offered novel visions of social organization? 

Prerequisite: Senior standing as an anthropology major or minor.  

Four credit hours.

AY483f Honors in Anthropology  Prerequisite: Senior standing, admission to the honors program, and permission of the supervising faculty member.  

Three or four credit hours.  

FACULTY


AY491f, 492s Independent Study  Individual topics in areas where the student has demonstrated the interest and competence necessary for independent work.  

Prerequisite: Permission of the instructor.  

Two to four credit hours.  

FACULTY