

Anthropological Background for Resilience and Adaptation

ANTH 616 (1 CR)

Fall 2011

Instructor: Dr. Patrick Plattet

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Office hours: W 3-5pm, or by appointment

Course Information:

Time: T/TR 8:00-9:30am

Place: Eielson 304

Prerequisites: Graduate standing or permission of instructor

Catalogue Course description:

These three background courses provide fundamental disciplinary perspectives; make students conversant in a discipline in which they have little-to-no experience; build a common vocabulary and frameworks for interdisciplinary sustainability science.

Course Objectives and Format:

This course is designed to provide you with a background in anthropology and a sense of its different approaches. We will spend our five weeks exploring domains of cultural anthropology that focus on the relationship between humans and their environment. We will attempt to define “culture” and examine the degree to which cultural domains (economics, politics, religion, social organization, kinship, etc.) mediate the interactions with and the perceptions of the environment. As a starting point, we will question the nature-culture dichotomy that has been a central dogma of anthropology for over sixty years. We will then evaluate two of the most central methodological components of the discipline – ethnographic fieldwork and the comparative method – and see how these components may help us better understand and evaluate the anthropological value of “resilience” and “sustainability.” Finally, we will examine the cultural production of environmental knowledge in situations of (rapid) social change: What are the underlying mechanisms of contemporary learning and transmission of land-based knowledge? Why does the ritual enactment of such knowledge matter in the study of global change?

Following the comparative scope of anthropology, this five-week module is conceived as a voyage that will shed light on the Circumpolar North through a series of ethnographic detours. Two levels of comparison will be developed and juxtaposed: a) Within the Circumpolar North through case studies from the Canadian Arctic, the Russian North, Far East Russia/Kamchatka (where Dr. Plattet has extended fieldwork experience); b) With non-Circumpolar worlds through examples from Indonesia, Sudan, and other “Southern” places.

The primary aims of the course are:

- Gain an understanding of the anthropological holistic approach
- Gain insights into the anthropology of human-environment interactions
- Learn methodological and theoretical tools that will help you better understand and

advance of class discussion, as well as on your active participation in discussion. There will also be small weekly tasks assigned, such as brainstorming on the key themes of the course, and these will count in your participation grade as well. If you miss a class, it will be your responsibility to obtain notes from a classmate.

- **Film Reaction Paper:** We will view one film in class and you will write a 2-3 page paper reacting to and discussing the film in light of class discussions and readings. More complete instructions for this assignment will be handed out in class.
- **Final paper:** Write an in-depth paper (10-15 pages) on one of the themes examined during this module. Make copies of a 1-page outline for the entire class. More complete instructions for this assignment will be handed out in class.

Support Services:

Student Support Services are available at UAF: <http://www.uaf.edu/sssp/>

These services include: free tutorial services; academic advising, mentoring, and personal support; direct financial assistance to qualified low-income participants; use of laptop computers, labs, and other technology resources; and cultural and social engagement. The office is located at 512 Gruening Building, and the phone number is 474-6844.

See also http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/catalog_10-11/services/serv01.html for more information about Tutoring services.

Writing Center:

Students can get help with their writing at The Writing Center (801 Gruening):

<http://www.alaska.edu/english/studentresources/writing/>

You can make an appointment (474-5314) to go over a paper with someone at any stage in the writing process, from rough outline to final draft. You can also print up to 25 pages at a crack for free. I highly recommend taking advantage of this service.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism:

I expect you to do your own work in accordance with the UAF Student Code of Conduct: <http://www.uaf.edu/catalog/current/academics/regs3.html> (see also *Class Schedule Fall 2010*, p. 117).

It goes without saying that cheating and plagiarism cannot be tolerated in any form in scholarly work. Be sure you understand what constitutes plagiarism and what are acceptable forms of citing published (and unpublished) material. For an explanation of what constitutes plagiarism see:

<http://library.uaf.edu/l101-plagiarism>

For an explanation of how to properly cite sources see:

<http://library.uaf.edu/l101-citing>

Disability Services:

The University of Alaska is committed to providing equal access for students with disabilities. If you experience a disability and will need special accommodations, please contact me during my office hours (see *Class Schedule Fall 2010*, p. 32).

Tentative Course/Module Calendar (Subject to Changes):

Week	Dates	Topics & Activities	Assignments
1	Oct. 4 & 6	<p>Topic: Resilience and Adaptation – An Anthropological Perspective (Introduction)</p> <p>Film: <i>The Brigade</i> (by Liivo Niglas, 2000) – Part I</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> R. Lavenda & E. Schultz, “Culture” (2010) Ph. Salzman & D.W. Attwood, “Ecological Anthropology” (2009) 	
2	Oct. 11 & 13	<p>Topic: The Nature-Culture Dichotomy</p> <p>Film: <i>The Brigade</i> (by Liivo Niglas, 2000) – Part II</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ph. Descola & G. Palsson, “Introduction to <i>Nature and Society</i>” (1996) E.E. Evans Pritchard, “An Interest in Cattle” (1940) Harris 1994 vs. Geertz 1973, “Should Cultural Anthropology Model Itself on the Natural Sciences?” 	Brainstorm on “ herding ” (as a way of engaging with the environment), and on human-domesticated animal relations
3	Oct. 18 & 20	<p>Topic: A Resilient Method – Ethnographic Fieldwork and Northern Environments</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> F. Boas “The Methods of Ethnology” (1920) T. Ingold, “Culture, Nature, Environment. Steps to an Ecology of Life” (2000) R. Schultz and E. Lavenda, “Fieldwork” (2001) 	Brainstorm on “ hunting ” (as a way of engaging with the environment), and on human-wild animal relations Film Reaction Paper due on TUESDAY
4	Oct. 25 & 27	<p>Topic: Knowing the Land, Perceiving Change – Adaptive Systems of Knowledge</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> G. Palsson, “Enskilment at Sea” (1994) R. Ellen, “Forest Knowledge, Forest Transformation: Political Contingency, Historical Ecology, and the Renegotiation of Nature in Central Seram” (2008) N. Lyons, “The Wisdom of Elders: Inuvialuit Social Memories of Continuity and Change in the Twentieth Century” (2010) 	Brainstorm on “ learning about learning ” (how do <i>you</i> come to know about <i>others’</i> ways of knowing?)
5	Nov. 1 & 3	<p>Topic: Spiritual Resilience – The Ritual Making of Sentient Environments</p>	Brainstorm on “ spirits ” and on

		<p><u>Readings:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• D. Anderson, "Sentient Ecology" (2000)• R. Hamayon "Shamanism: A Religion of Nature?" (1994)	<p>the interactions between visible and invisible domains of the environment</p> <p>Final Paper due on TUESDAY</p>
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