

a. COURSE STRUCTURE

The principal aim of the course is to introduce you to a number of key texts and current thinkers on the anthropology of “nature”, broadly conceived. The course works through a series of seminars based on group work and presentations, followed by a written assignment (due April 1). Each session includes four core readings. You will divide into four groups (this may change depending on attendance), and each group will tackle one of the readings for the next session. “Tackling” here means that you will work through the text, think about the key issues and give a presentation on the text to the rest of the class. Each group will have approximately ten to fifteen minutes for their class presentation.

This part of the course is also a test of your teamwork and organisation skills. I suggest that you get together in your group during the day, discuss the text and decide how to conduct the presentation for the evening seminar. After the presentations, the remainder of each class will be devoted to general discussion, questions and a brief introduction of the texts for the next session.

You may decide amongst yourselves how to organise and conduct your group presentation, but the following are some of the points you will want to keep in mind:

Core argument. What is the author saying? What are the main points of the argument?

Aim. Why was this written? What is it trying to achieve? What is the problem it addresses? What concerns drive it?

Key terms. What are the most important terms, phrases and concepts that the text makes use of? Where do they come from? How are they developed?

Context. When was the text written? What other texts and authors does it draw on, reference, critique or (possibly) ignore? Where does it situate itself in relation to key traditions, movements, trends, events or problems of its time?

Critique. What are the weak or problematic points of the text? Are there unwarranted assumptions? Where and how would you disagree?

Usefulness. How is the text useful or relevant? What can you make use of? How does it fit in with or modify your understanding of anthropology?

Individual perspectives. Texts are open entities, multiple readings are legitimate and difference can be productive. Did you have any disagreements within the group? Did you interpret the text in different ways?

Questions for the class. What questions does the text leave you with? Is there anything you find unclear or problematic, or that you wish to share with the rest of the class?

The texts are challenging and time-consuming, some more than others, but it is vital that you engage with them before coming to the seminars. Part of your grade will be determined by

seminar participation and, more importantly, this is not a lecture course: your contributions and engagement form a vital part of its content.

b. READINGS

1. First Session

Antrosio, "Human Nature and Anthropology"

2. Some Introductions

Geertz, "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man", in *The Interpretation of Cultures*

Milton, "Anthropology, Culture and Environmentalism", in *Environmentalism and Cultural Theory*

Sahlins, *The Western Illusion of Human Nature* (skim-read the sections on Ancient Greece)

Wilson, "Dilemma" and "Hope, in *On Human Nature*

3. Ingold

"The Animal in the Study of Humanity", in *What is an animal?*

"Culture, Nature, Environment", in *The Perception of the Environment*

"Against Human Nature", in Gontier et al, *Evolutionary Epistemology*

"Anthropology comes to Life" and "Anthropology is *not* Ethnography", in *Being Alive*

4. Haraway

"A Cyborg Manifesto", in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*

The Companion Species Manifesto (particularly pages 1 to 40).

"When Species Meet: Introductions", in *When Species Meet*

Weisberg, "The Broken Promises of Monsters"

5. Latour

War of the Worlds

"Why Political Ecology has to Let Go of Nature", in *The Politics of Nature*,

"From Multiculturalism to Multinaturalism"

Viveiros de Castro, "Exchanging Perspectives", Descola, "Human Natures" and Latour, "Perspectivism"

6. Some Conclusions

Rose & Novas "Biological Citizenship" in *Global Assemblages*

Tsing "Arts of Inclusion, or, How to Love a Mushroom" in *Unloved Others*

Kirksey & Helmreich, "The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography"

Morton "Introduction: Toward a Theory of Ecological Criticism" in *Ecology Without Nature*

c. ASSIGNMENT

"There is no such thing as human nature" — Discuss. Approximately 2 000 to 2 500 words, due April 1.

Your answer must be based on at least two of the texts discussed in the seminar. You are welcome to include other material you consider relevant, including your own research and texts from other courses, as long as you discuss at least two of the texts we have dealt with in class. Submit your assignments to me by email and include your standing (i.e. degree and year) so this can be taken into account when marking.

The aim of the coursework exercise is to train you in the production of scholarly texts. As such, your submission needs to abide by the following simple rules:

Do not plagiarize. Plagiarism is easy to detect and will result in an automatic fail. If you are using words or argument that someone else has written, ensure that this is made clear in your text. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it, there are numerous sources available online. You can also check with me.

Answer the question. You will be assessed for evidence of critical thinking, including your ability to construct an argument that responds to the question. Think carefully about the question, then decide how you intend to answer it. Do not under any circumstance submit your coursework from other courses, unless you have substantively edited it and it clearly addresses the specific topic you have been asked to discuss here.

Check your spelling and grammar. Presentation is important. Avoid unnecessary mistakes. Get your grammar right. Make your reader happy. Use an online spellchecker if you have to. Choose either UK or US spelling and stick to it: be consistent.

Get your references right. Bibliography and references are vital elements of a scholarly text. Find a suitable style (e.g. Harvard style, Seattle style) and stick with it. You will be assessed partly on your ability to present a text that is well formed and abides by scholarly conventions.

Do not plagiarize. Every time you plagiarize, God kills a kitten.

Hand your work in on time. See below. Time management is an essential (if undervalued) academic skill. Start writing early. Give yourself time to edit, proofread and spellcheck. Do not try to do everything at the last minute. Nobody likes to mark a rushed job.

Do not plagiarize. Did I mention this?

Within these parameters, you are free to experiment.

The question is phrased in deliberately broad terms, intended to get you thinking about some of the vital issues at the heart of your own chosen discipline—questions that often do not receive as much attention as they deserve. Do not let yourself be intimidated by the scope of the question, but answer it on your own terms.

Late submissions will be marked down by one full grade every two days, starting April 2, unless you have agreed an alternative date with me in advance (this means “while the seminars are still happening”). This works as follows:

- 1-2 days late: — 1 full grade (A=B)
- 3-4 days late: — 2 full grades (A=C)
- 5-6 days: — 3 full grades (A=D)
- 7+ days: Automatic fail

In other words, it is a good idea for you to concentrate really hard on meeting the deadline.