

ANTH 340: Worlds of Culture: Global Ethnography

Spring 2021

Instructor: Leigh Bloch

Class time: Mon/Wed 4:50-6:05pm

Zoom Classroom Link: [Here](#)

Zoom Classroom Password: 2021ANT340

Email: lbloch@agnesscott.edu

Office Hours: Wed 1:00-3:00 or by appt.

Office Hours Zoom Link: [Here](#)

Course Description

This course surveys a sample of ethnographies offering detailed anthropological studies of a range of geographic regions and cultural themes. The course probes other cultures' ways of knowing and how they deal with religion, ecology, economics, kinship, gender, health, language, and globalization.

I have selected the ethnographies for this semester around an underlying question: How can we re-envision and transform our everyday institutions (including anthropological theory and practice) in order to build a more ethically desirable world on a wounded planet? We will focus on several themes that are especially salient within contemporary anthropology:

- How do contemporary ethnographers seek to represent peoples, cultures, power relations, and global entanglements? What are the stylistic and political stakes, considerations, commitments of such representations (and how are these elements related to one another)? Why does this matter?
- How are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) and ally ethnographers trying to reimagine the anthropology in the present moment to interrupt colonial legacies and power dynamics within the field?
- What does it mean to do ethnography and anthropology in a historical moment of proliferating apocalypses? Is there value to ethnography in such a world, and if so, what is it? How can we move past "business as usual" responses to catastrophic conditions?

We will begin the semester around the questions posed in "The Case for Letting Anthropology Burn." What does letting anthropology burn mean; and what does it mean to conduct anthropology in a burning world? How do we understand the underlying social conditions that produce this burning, particularly in terms of social inequalities and environmental destabilization? Finally, we will ask how ethnographic research can deepen our understanding of possibilities might exist for life in the ruins of capitalism and empire, and by extension, our visions for more ethically desirable futures within the post-apocalyptic world that we already inhabit.

Course goals

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Articulate key issues, questions, and problems in contemporary anthropology;
- Articulate what in-depth ethnographic research and writing may have to offer contemporary social and environmental problems;
- Explain the role of historical, political, and economic context beyond neat cultural or national boundaries in analyzing ethnographic data;

- Critically discuss the stylistic and thematic choices that anthropologists make in representing ethnographic data, including the politics of ethnographic representation;
- Explain postcolonial, anti-racist, and Indigenous critiques of anthropology as well as how contemporary scholars seek to transform these dynamics;
- Discuss how in-depth ethnographic research can be used to critique systems of domination;
- Articulate a vision for life for living well together on a wounded planet that finds inspiration from the everyday lives of marginalized peoples.

Prerequisites

Anthropology 101

Workload

This is a 4-credit course. Students should expect to complete an additional nine hours of work each week in addition to class meeting times (class meeting time includes participation in asynchronous activities as detailed below).

We will read 70-100 pages each week

Grading

Your grade will consist of the following elements:

Participation	40 points
Short Paper 1	10 points
Short Paper 2	10 points
Short Paper 3	10 points
Final Paper	30 points

A: The student consistently makes creative contributions to discussion and moves the conversation forward in significant ways. The student draws connections between course materials and extends key concepts by applying them to new situations. Engages with both the instructor *and* with fellow students.

B: The student consistently contributes to class discussion and demonstrates a solid understanding of course materials. The student thinks through the readings, other students' comments, and one's own points well. Engages with both the instructor *and* with fellow students.

C: The student sometimes participates in class discussion and understands most of the facts of the readings, but perhaps not the big picture.

D: The student only infrequently participates in class discussion or makes statements that are unrelated or do not advance the project of the course. Only has a partial understanding of the materials. Spotty attendance.

F: The student does not consistently come to class, does not participate in or disrupts class discussion, or misses the point of course materials. This is a failing grade.

Participation

The class will be divided into synchronistic (we all attend class at the same time) and asynchronistic (we complete work at our own pacing) days. Unless otherwise noted, Mondays are asynchronous and Wednesdays are synchronous. *Participation in both synchronous and asynchronous sessions is a requirement for passing this course.*

Synchronistic class sessions will be held over zoom. We will work through course materials through lecture and class discussion, during which we will review, interpret, extend, draw connections between, and critique the readings. As such, students must come to class having completed the readings and prepared to discuss them. Discussions will be focused less on discovering a singular “right answer” than deepening our inquiry into social and cultural processes. Departing from a “banking” model of education in which knowledge is “deposited” in students’ brains and “withdrawn” in tests—primary teaching students to regurgitate information—the goal of these discussions will be to practice the tools of critical thinking and analysis.

You are not required to have your camera on during synchronistic class meetings. It is a good practice to mute your audio unless you are speaking (except for in small group breakout rooms) but be mindful of remembering to un-mute your audio when you wish to speak. If you say something and don’t receive a response, check to see if you are muted.

For asynchronistic classes, you will be required to watch a recorded lecture and participate in a text-based online forum discussing the readings/lecture. While watching the lectures, write down any questions that come up in your notes. You can either ask these questions to your peers via the forum or save them for the next synchronistic class and ask me. For the forum component of these classes, you are required to write at minimum one post and comment on two of your peers’ posts (for a total of three posts/comments). Please note that I may provide specific prompts for forum posts in my recorded lectures.

Tips for good forum posts:

- Open-ended questions about the lecture/readings (as opposed to a yes/no question or a request for factual information) can spawn a discussion;
- Anything you found surprising in the lecture/readings is excellent to write about. Feeling of surprise means that something from the course went against your prior preconceived assumptions about the world or human nature. That’s interesting! Unpack your assumptions and the implications of the course materials. How did they contradict or complicate your assumptions? How else might we understand human society – and social possibility – in way that accounts for this new information?
- Discuss a passage or quote from the readings that you found particularly interesting or thought-provoking. Unpack it!

Agnes Scott Zoom Policy

To preserve the integrity of the classroom experience and to protect students’ privacy, which we are legally required to do, only students registered in the course may attend a Zoom class meeting.

Synchronous classes will be recorded and posted on Canvas.

Written Assignments

For this course, you will complete four papers. Written work must be proofread, double-spaced, 12-point font, with 1-inch margins and numerated pages. I will hand out prompts for essay assignments at least two weeks before the deadline so that you can manage your time appropriately. Written work will be submitted via Canvas.

Paper 1-3: Response Papers

The first three papers should be responses to the ethnographies we read. You may choose which of the three books you respond to. These will be 2-3 pages in length and due two weeks after we finish the book.

Paper 4: Final Paper

The final paper will synthesize core themes from the class into a response to the guiding questions of the course:

- The case for letting anthropology burn
- The possibility of life in capitalist (and white supremacist, colonial, and heteropatriarchal) ruins

8-10 pages.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be docked one letter grade (10 points) for each week they are late.

Absences

In order to maximize your autonomy to prioritize your own physical and emotional health during a pandemic, attendance will be run on an honor system. There will be no penalties for missing class, but students will get more out of the class by participating in in-class discussions and other activities.

I will take attendance each class meeting for my own personal use. If I do not see you in class a for several sessions and have not heard from you as to why, I may follow up with you directly to make sure you are doing OK.

Honor System and Plagiarism

Students are expected to adhere to the principles of the Honor Pledge in all aspects of this class. One of the most important things you will learn as an Agnes Scott student is how to use the writings of others in combination with your own ideas and research to create thoughtful papers that make contributions to the world of knowledge with full credit to all the minds that have participated. If you directly (direct quotations) or indirectly (paraphrases, other borrowings) borrow ideas from others—whether those ideas appear in books, articles, or online, or develop during conversations—you must give proper and full credit to the original sources.

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's ideas or words without giving them credit. This can mean using someone's ideas without proper acknowledgement in papers you are writing for class,

copying a sentence directly from a book or journal without citing the source, or turning in the same paper or assignment for different classes without the professors' knowledge. In the United States, there are specific requirements for documenting sources and ideas. You can learn about these standards by consulting your professors or by visiting the Writing Center. Plagiarism is a serious offense and the penalty ranges from warnings to probation or 5 suspension. I do not mind if students work together and discuss their ideas, but students are expected to prepare assignments and write papers independently unless otherwise instructed.

Academic Honesty Statement from the Committee on Academic Standards and Admission

“The Agnes Scott College honor code embodies an ideal of character, conduct, and citizenship, and is an important part of the College’s mission and core identity. This applies especially to academic honesty and integrity. Passing off someone else’s work as your own represents intellectual fraud and theft, and violates the core values of our academic community. To be honorable, you should understand not only what counts as academic dishonesty, but also how to avoid engaging in these practices. You should:

- review each course syllabus for the professor’s expectations regarding course work and class attendance.
- attribute all ideas taken from other sources; this shows respect for other scholars. Plagiarism can include portraying another’s work or ideas as your own, buying a paper online and turning it in as if it were your own work, or not citing or improperly citing references on a reference page or within the text of a paper.
- not falsify or create data and resources or alter a graded work without the prior consent of your professor. This includes making up a reference for a works cited page or making up statistics or facts for academic work.
- not allow another party to do your work/exam, or submit the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from the course instructors. Cheating also includes taking an exam for another person, looking on another person’s exam for answers, using exams from previous classes without permission, or bringing and using unauthorized notes or resources (i.e., electronic, written, or otherwise) during an exam.
- not facilitate cheating, which can happen when you help another student complete a take home exam, give answers to an exam, talk about an exam with a student who has not taken it, or collaborate with others on work that is supposed to be completed independently.
- be truthful about the submission of work, which includes the time of submission and the place of submission (e.g., email, online, in a mailbox, to an office, etc.)

“You should understand that penalties resulting from dishonest conduct range from failure of the assignment to expulsion from the college. You should speak with your professors if you need clarification about any of these policies.”

Modified Pledge

Students pledge that they have completed assignments honestly by attaching the following statement to each test, quiz, paper, overnight assignment, in-class essay, or other work:

*I pledge that I have neither given nor received any unauthorized aid on this assignment.
(Signed) _____*

Communications

To attend office hours, please schedule an appointment on COMPASS.

I will respond to reasonable email inquiries within a reasonable timeframe: Usually within 24 hours. If you don't hear back from me after that time, feel free to follow up. I expect your emails to be courteous and professional: It is good etiquette to include a salutation and signature and to make the subject line relevant to the content. Proofread all emails before sending. Although grammar and email etiquette standards are ultimately a means of reproducing social hierarchies, these skills will make your life easier.

Changes to the syllabus, accommodations for snow days, and other logistical issues for the course will be communicated via email.

Title IX

Agnes Scott is here to help if you have experienced any form of sexual harassment or violence, dating or domestic violence, or stalking. Please talk to any faculty or staff member with whom you feel comfortable. Faculty and staff members want to support you and have been trained to help. They also will inform the Title IX office so that you can learn about the options available to you. If you do not want college administrators to know what you have experienced, you may talk to the chaplain, as well as nurses or counselors in the Wellness Center in complete confidentiality. They will not tell anyone what you share with them unless you give your express permission.

Please note that I am a Required Reporter. This means that if you discuss a Title IX violation with me, I am required to report this information to the Title IX Coordinator. That person will reach out to you to offer resources and explain your options, but you are not required to accept their offer to talk.

Inclusion

This course adheres to the principles of diversity and inclusion integral to the Agnes Scott community. We respect people from all backgrounds and affirm people's decisions about gender expression and identity. Please inform me if your name is different from the one listed on the class roster and feel free to correct me if I ever use the wrong name or pronoun.

Over the course of the semester, we will talk about multiple forms of oppression and structural violence, including colonialism, race, class, gender, and sexuality. If you experience discomfort discussing these topics, I encourage you to "lean in" to that discomfort as part of the learning process. These conversations are not about whether you as an individual are a good or bad person, but about understanding broader social structures and processes that shape the world we live in. At minimum, I expect all students to work to understand the arguments of the readings and the course – even if they disagree with them.

Content Warnings

I will do my best to provide content warnings when reading about or discussing things that may trigger past traumas. I encourage you to do the same if you raise such an issue in discussion. If a

discussion triggers a past trauma for you, you are welcome to leave the class until you feel ready to return without penalty. If you wish to discuss why you left after class, I accept those conversations as an important engagement with course materials and learning objectives. However, you are not required to do so.

Accessibility

I strive to make my classes accessible to all students. Please communicate with me early in the semester to let me know what your needs are and what kinds of accommodations I can provide. These conversations are confidential. If you have not already done so, contact Rashad Morgan in the Office of Academic Advising (X6174) to complete the registration process. If you have an accommodations letter, please provide me with a copy.

Course Evaluations

Course evaluations will be completed online. Near the end of the semester, you will receive an email message that will provide a link to complete the evaluation. These are very important to me because they provide critical feedback that I use for improving the course and my teaching.

I also ask that students complete a mid-semester feedback form. Information from your responses are exclusively for my own use (the end-of-semester evaluations are also used by the administration). The mid-semester feedback form is important because it lets me adapt and tailor my courses to your needs during the semester.

Required Texts

Ballestero, Andrea. 2019. *A Fugure History of Water*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Dave, Naisargi N. 2012. *Queer Activism in India: A Story in the Anthropology of Ethics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Shange, Savannah. 2019. *Progressive Dystopia: Abolition, Anti-Blackness, and Schooling in San Francisco*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Simpson, Audra. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus. Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Tsing, Anna. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

***Note: You should be able to find many or all of these as ebooks through the Agnes Scott Library.

Schedule of Readings

Week 1

Wednesday, January 20

- Read the syllabus!

Week 2

Monday, January 25

- Ryan Jobson. “The Case for Letting Anthropology Burn”
- Zoe Todd. “The Decolonial Turn 2.0”

Wednesday, January 27

- Shange, 1-43

Week 3

Monday, February 1

- Shange, 44-91

Wednesday, February 3

- Shange, 92-122
- Optional: Garcia, “The Echo.”

Week 4

Monday, February 8

- Shange, 123-161

Wednesday, February 10

- Weston, “The Virtual Anthropologist”
- Ranco, “Towards a Native Anthropology”

Week 5

Monday, February 15

- Simpson, 1-36

Wednesday, February 17

- Simpson, 37-66

Week 6

Monday, February 22

- Simpson, 67-114

Wednesday, February 24

- Simpson, 115-146

Week 7

Monday, March 1

- Simpson, 147-194

Wednesday, March, 3

- Dave, 1-32

Week 8

Monday, March 8

- 33-96

Wednesday, March 10

- Dave, 97-136

Week 9

Monday, March 15

- NO CLASS – Spring Break

Wednesday, March 17

- Dave, 137-166

Week 10

Monday, March 22

- Dave, 167-204

Wednesday, March 24

- Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, “The Importance of a Date”
- Kim TallBear, “Caretaking Relations, Not American Dreaming”
- Optional: Kyle Whyte, “Our Ancestors’ Dystopia Now”

Week 11

Monday, March 29

- Tsing, 1-54

Wednesday, March 31

- Tsing, 55-96

Week 12

Monday, April 5

- Tsing, 97-148

Wednesday, April 7

- Tsing, 149-204

Week 13

Monday, April 12

- Tsing, 205-250

Wednesday, April 14

- Tsing, 251-285

Week 14

Monday, April 19

- Ballestero, Preface and 1-35

Wednesday, April 21

- Ballestero, 36-74

Week 15

Monday, April 26

- Ballestero, 75-109

Wednesday, April 28

- Ballestero, 109-143

Week 16

Monday, May 3

- Ballestero, 144-185

Wednesday, May 5

- Panel discussion. “The Case for Letting Anthropology Burn?” Link [here](#).