ANT 4B03 Winter Syllabus 2018

CURRENT PROBLEMS IN CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY: HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIANISM

Fridays, 2:30 -5:20 Room LRW 1056

Instructor: Prof. Andrew Gilbert
Office: CNH 510
Office Hours: Fridays, 1:00-2:00pm or by appointment
Email: gilbera@mcmaster.ca

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the rise of humanitarianism and human rights as dominant ways in which actors both powerful and weak conceptualize and respond to a range of social processes, such as political conflict, emancipation, poverty, and displacement. This is core terrain for anthropology, because the figure of the human lies at the centre of these discourses and forms of action. Therefore, in this course we explore the anthropological contributions to human rights activism, the anthropological or ethnographic study of human rights practices, and anthropological-based critiques of human rights as a framework to realize social and political goals. We also historicize humanitarianism and investigate the possibilities and limits of humanitarian action as a way of confronting the challenges that face our world.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The first objective of this course is to explore the subject of humanitarianism and human rights from an anthropological perspective. We begin by investigating the concept of human rights and the relationship between rights and culture, the ethnographic study of human rights and humanitarian practices, as well as the limits of the human rights and humanitarian framework as a paradigm for understanding and acting in the world. Students will thus become familiar with the field of human rights, humanitarianism, as well as with advanced analytic concepts and debates in anthropology.

The second course objective is to develop students’ active listening, reading, and writing skills, as well as the capacity to synthesize material and think across contexts and media. Coursework and class meetings will be made up of reading, watching visual media, listening to the occasional lecture, in-class discussion, analytic writing, and oral presentations.

The third course objective is to help students develop the crucial skill of testing ideas in critical dialogue with their peers. The organizational format of the class is thus designed to encourage both agreement and disagreement while at the same time promoting a spirit of intellectual generosity whereby students feel comfortable taking the kinds of risks that are necessary to developing their own ideas. In this way and others, students will be encouraged to see one another as a critical resource in their own learning process.
COURSE ORGANIZATION

After the first week, class meetings for **Weeks 2-10** will be conducted according to a seminar format as follows:

**Written Response (+ Follow-up Paper), Oral Response**
No later than Saturday of every week, I will circulate questions for the next week’s readings to the class. Two or three students will write a **short response paper** based upon those questions (around 2 pages or 700 words), which will be due to the instructor by Tuesday evening, who will circulate them to the rest of the class. Two or three other students will prepare a **short oral set of reflections** on the response papers, to be given at the beginning of class Friday. (Three days after the class meeting the students who gave written responses to the questions are required to submit a second written answer to these questions, having had the benefit of class discussion.)

These roles rotate week by week so that by the end of the semester each student will have contributed one written response (and follow-up paper) and one oral response.

The advantages of this format are many: firstly, by the time we get to class, many basic issues will already be on the table. Thus our discussion will already have a coherence to it, and can proceed from a more advanced level. This allows us all to get more out of our engagement with each text and each other. Secondly, students will leave the course with a robust set of notes, essays, and ideas. Thirdly, it allows for an intensive, but smoother rhythm to the semester, without being punctuated by a mid-term exam or paper. The role of the instructor at this point will be to facilitate and mediate discussion between students.

Obviously, everyone will have to really keep on top of the reading. Those generating written and oral responses will also have to turn these around within a relatively short time span. This will only work if students meet the course deadlines.

**Collective Discussion of Readings**
Using the oral responses by the students, the class will engage in a collective discussion of the readings for that week. Active contributions to this discussion will form the basis of a participation grade.

**Reflection and Further Discussion**
After our initial discussion of the readings, students will break into groups and generate one question for further discussion, and the class will then vote upon which questions we should discuss as a class. Occasionally, we may view a film or part of a film, and students may be asked to generate discussion questions for the film. Active contributions to this discussion will form the basis of a participation grade.

**Final Project**
Starting in Week 3, students will spend a portion of the class meeting in discussion with members of their group about the final project. This final project will be an investigation of a current or recent crisis, and members of the group will pick an aspect to analyze and
present to the class during the final weeks of the course. This assignment is designed to have a collective/group component and an individual component (as well as an oral and written component). More detailed instructions will be provided in Week 3.

**Grading**

The course grade will be made up as follows:

- Written Responses/Paper: 15% (10% for first submission, 5% for follow-up paper)
- Oral Response: 10%
- Class Participation: 20%
- Preliminary Analysis: 15%
- Final Presentation: 20%
- Final Paper: 20%

**Course Texts/Readings**

The course readings are a mix of books available in the campus bookstore (and listed below), articles available electronically via Mills Library, or will be provided in a course packet which students may photocopy.


The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, Appendix 3, [https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf](https://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:
1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

In this course we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Email Forwarding in MUGSI: [http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html](http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html)

Most questions can and should be asked in class/discussion section or in person outside of class/discussion section. However, if you need to email the instructor, do so with very brief questions (a couple of sentences) and in a form that can be answered briefly (ideally “yes” or “no”). I cannot respond to lengthy questions in writing but are happy to discuss them in office hours.
Please do not expect an immediate answer. We will try and answer emails within two days (three if it is over a weekend).

When sending the instructor an email put ANT 4B03 in the subject line of your email. Please sign it with your full name and student number. A final note on communication etiquette: when writing the instructor an email, please conform it to the standard greeting in letter-writing practices, i.e. “Dear Prof. Gilbert.”

LAPTOP AND PDA/CELL PHONE POLICY

In class lectures and discussion sections, laptops are strongly discouraged for reasons made clear on the first day of class. If you need or strongly prefer a laptop for taking notes or accessing readings in class for any reason, please come talk with me, and I am happy to make that work. I’ll just ask you to commit to using the laptop only for class-related work. Students using laptops for other purposes will be asked to turn their laptops off for the remainder of the course.

Students are required to silence and refrain from using cell phones and other PDAs during class meetings and discussion sections. This includes sending and receiving text messages. Students who violate this rule will be asked to leave the classroom.

LATE AND MISSING WORK

You are responsible for completing all of the learning assessments on the dates for which they are scheduled. In the event of missed course work and/or exam(s), the student must take the following actions:

1) Properly submit a McMaster Student Absence (MSAF) Form (note that this can only be used once per term). Please note that policies concerning the use of MSAFs have changed (see http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/) OR contact your Faculty office if you have already used the MSAF once.

2) Contact the instructor immediately after having submitted the MSAF form or contact your Faculty office (within 24 hours) to provide an explanation for the missed coursework and/or missed exams. Grades will not be re-weighted. You are responsible to schedule an appropriate date to submit your assignment.

If you do not properly submit an MSAF Form, or if you have already submitted one during the semester, some late work (post-class paper, take home points, final paper) will be accepted and assessed a late penalty of half a grade per day up to 5 days (i.e. if you earned a B, it becomes a B- after one day, a C+ after two, a C after three, and so on), after which the assignment will not be accepted without appropriate medical documentation. Other work (in-class presentations) cannot be accepted/submitted late. Emailed excuses do not constitute appropriate documentation. Extensions are impossible with the format of this course.
SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Written work (post-class paper, take home points, final paper) may be submitted in electronic copy through the Dropbox function on the course’s ATL website; hard copies may also be required. Ungraded work will not be accepted or date stamped by the administrative staff in the Department of Anthropology. All written work are subject to evaluation for originality. This course uses an evaluation service provided by Turnitin.com, which students may opt out of; in this case, Grammarly.com will be used. If you would like to opt out of evaluation by Turnitin.com, please let the instructor know before February 1.

ACCESSIBILITY

McMaster University has an office of Student Accessibility Services (http://sas.mcmaster.ca/). Students who require accommodation for documented issues should contact SAS as early in the term as possible. McMaster also recently launched MACcessibility, part of the Office of Human Rights and Equity Services to help advance the University’s goal of building an inclusive community with a shared purpose. More information can be found at http://www.mcmaster.ca/hres/index.html.

If you require this information in an alternate/accessible format, please contact Marcia Furtado at 905-525-9140 extension 24423 or email furtam1@mcmaster.ca
WEEK 1: JANUARY 5: INTRODUCTION + HUMAN RIGHTS DECLARATIONS


“AAA Declaration on Anthropology and Human Rights” (1999)


WEEK 2: JANUARY 12: ANTHROPOLOGICAL ENGAGEMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS: PLUSES AND MINUSES


WEEK 3: JANUARY 19: THE RISE AND FALL OF HUMAN RIGHTS I


WEEK 4: JANUARY 26: THE RISE AND FALL OF HUMAN RIGHTS II


WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 2: THE RISE AND FALL OF HUMAN RIGHTS III


WEEK 6: FEBRUARY 9: WORLD OF HUMANITARIANISMS (AND INTERVENTION)


WEEK 7: FEBRUARY 16: HUMANITARIANIZATION AND SUFFERING HUMANITARIANISM


FEBRUARY 23: NO CLASS: READING WEEK.

WEEK 8: MARCH 2: THE HUMANITARIAN CONDITION I


WEEK 9: MARCH 9: THE HUMANITARIAN CONDITION II


WEEK 10: MARCH 16: THE HUMANITARIAN CONDITION III


WEEK 11: MARCH 23: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

NO CLASS MARCH 30.

WEEK 12: APRIL 6: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS