Peoples of the Arctic

ANT 4932/ANG 6314 T 4th Period, 2354 Turlington
Spring 2008 Th 4-5th Period, 2342 Turlington

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Course Description and Objectives

“Arctic Peoples, among the most easily recognized ethnographic populations, remain a poorly understood group about whom easy generalizations are routine: they eat only raw meat, they give their wives as gifts to strangers, they rub noses instead of kissing, they send their elderly out on ice floes to die. We are prepared to believe almost anything about such an unfamiliar and peculiar group”  (Martin 1986:420).

The purpose of this course is to demystify the peoples of the North American Arctic. This semester, we will pay particular attention to the origins of the peoples who inhabit the region, the history of contact with Europeans, the various economic and environmental adaptations that people have made to their environment, the specific cultural features that characterize foragers in the North American Arctic and Subarctic, and the ways in which these peoples are adapting to the challenges of their contemporary political and social environments.

The Arctic is a big place, and it is filled with many different cultures. We will focus on specific groups from different regions in the Arctic. The objectives of this modified case study approach are many but include (1) becoming familiar with the ethnology of the Arctic; (2) developing an understanding of the similarities and differences among Northern peoples; (3) increasing knowledge of the history and nature of contact between Arctic Peoples and Europeans/Canadians/Americans; (4) improving skills in working with ethnographic materials; and (5) improving abilities in communication through written, oral, and visual methods.

Textbooks and Reading Assignments

There are five textbooks for this course, which are as follows:


If you really like new books, be my guest, but they will be expensive. I strongly suggest that you shop online for used copies – you should be able to find each one for $10 or less used, except for McElroy, which is spanking new.

In addition to the textbooks, there will be additional reading material from placed on reserve. These readings are required and will provide the details and alternate perspectives that the text ethnographies cannot. Dissemination of reserve materials (which are listed in the course schedule) is TBA.

Readings will be completed ahead of time, and students are expected to be prepared to discuss these readings in
class. While I, like most of my colleagues, enjoy hearing the melodious sound on my own voice, droning lecture will get us nowhere: we will need to discuss readings to understand them. When I lecture, it will be to provide background necessary for understanding the readings. My intent is that our class meetings will be primarily discussion.

**Exams and Grading**

There are two exams for this course – a mid-term and a final. Both exams will be in essay format and will be comprised of short answers and longer essay questions. Typically, I will allow some choice on the exams, and I will provide potential questions and a list of terms and concepts as a study guide before hand. Each exam will be worth 100 points.

Students are also required to write a term paper during the semester. The paper is expected to be between 10-12 pages (15-20 for the graduate students), typed and double-spaced, on a topic of your choice but approved ahead of time. Detailed directions and a list of suggested topics will be forthcoming next week. To facilitate your paper writing, students are expected to submit a brief proposal, outlining the paper topic and key sources. The paper is worth 100 points.

Because of the discussion-oriented nature of the class, students will be graded on the quality of class participation. Participation is a constructive activity, which means that you must not only have interesting and useful things to contribute to the discussion but also remain sensitive to others in the classroom. Being disrespectful of other opinions or hogging the spotlight are just as bad as not saying anything. Your participation grade is worth 50 points. You should note that 50 points is more than enough to make for a whole letter grade in this class, so this is not a trivial component of the course.

Because real participation remains such an unusual component of most college classrooms, I should add here that “participation” and “discussion” are not unstructured activities. Rather, much of the discussion is guided either by discussion questions provided to accompany readings and periodic small-group, in-class discussions of particular topics. You will receive a status report on your participation efforts during the middle of the semester.

In summary, the grade breakdown for the course looks like the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid Term Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>350</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For starters, I expect that 315 points is necessary for an A (A- actually; 315 is 90% of all possible points). Depending on how the class does, I may curve by lowering the bar, but I will never raise it.

**Course Policies**

*Attendance Policy*

I will call roll until I know all of your names, but I do not feel the need to assign a grade based on your attendance. However, given the size of the class and my emphasis on discussion of the material, it will be difficult for you to participate if you are not here. You have a responsibility to both the class and yourself to be here. UF policy is that students will attend all classes. I will also note that class attendance is highly
correlated with your performance on exams, and thus your grade in the course. I will not be inclined to do any favors for students who are borderline if they have shown a half-hearted commitment to being in class.

**Cheating Policy**

As a UF student you are expected to display exemplary behavior with regard to all academic endeavors, as per the honor code. Aside from cheating being bad for your karma, students caught cheating on exams or plagiarizing papers will be confronted about their behavior and may fail the course. If you are unaware of what actually constitutes plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty, Judicial Affairs also maintains the academic honesty guidelines on the web: [www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honestybrochure.htm](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honestybrochure.htm). If you are unsure whether your activities are legitimate regarding paper writing and exam taking, please do not hesitate to ask me.

**Course Outline**

**Important Dates:**

- **Paper Proposals Due:** February 5
- **Mid-Term Exam:** February 28
- **Papers Due:** April 1
- **Final Exam:** TBA

As I see it, there are three themes that I want to focus on in this course: (1) Environment, Culture, and Subsistence, (2) What are Inuit? What are Eskimos? What is Culture?, and (3) Culture Change and Cultural Survival. All of the readings focus on these three elements, but this is a pretty good place to break them up. We’ll go through each as they come up. Dates for each topic are estimates. Class interest will dictate progress through the semester.


**Reserve Readings**


