

ANT 215: Anthropology in Movies and Fiction

**Interim Session, May 9 – May 27, 2011
MTWRF, rm. 23 ten Hour, 1 – 3:30 pm
3 credit hours**

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Prerequisites

None. This course is open to all undergraduates, and requires no prior anthropology experience.

Course Description

This course gives students an opportunity to examine how anthropologists and core anthropological issues are portrayed and explored in movies and fiction. We will view movie clips and read relevant sections of short stories, with a special focus on the science fiction/fantasy genre and the various “imaginary worlds” that this genre has inspired. Then, we will compare portrayals in fiction to anthropological perspectives on questions such as: What makes a human? Where does our species come from, and where are we headed? How important are the differences that separate us? Can we ever really understand each other?

Objectives

Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course students should be able to:

1. Describe both general patterns and variation in how core anthropological issues are portrayed in movies and fiction.
2. Make an informed comparison between such portrayals and how those same issues are treated in mainstream anthropological scholarship.
3. Identify the role of science fiction, fantasy, and other forms of fiction in the anthropological exploration of human nature.
4. Apply the critical perspective gained in this course to new movies and works of fiction that we have not discussed.

Outline of Topics Covered During the Semester

Please note that the readings or film clips are subject to change, and topics may need to be extended across additional days, combined, and/or deleted entirely depending on the speed with which we progress through our discussions. You will be notified in advance of any changes, both electronically and in class.

- 1 Introduction
Film clips: Stargate
- 2 What sets humans apart from other animals?
Read: Stanley G. Weinbaum, "A Martian Odyssey"
Film clips: Planet of the Apes, ST:TNG "Genesis"
- 3 Human origins and evolution
Read: Robert Moore Williams, "Robot's Return"
Film clips: Clan of the Cave Bear
- 4 What is our future evolutionary trajectory?
Read: Greg Bear, "Blood Music"
Film clips: The Outer Limits "Sixth Finger"
- 5 Human ecology and our relationship with nature
Read: Poul Anderson, "The Sharing of Flesh"
Film clips: Star Trek IV, Red Planet
- 6 Race and difference
Read: Octavia Butler, "Amnesty"
Film clips: LotR: The Fellowship of the Ring, Men in Black
- 7 Women, gender, motherhood
Read: Judith Merrill, "Survival Ship"
Film clips: The Handmaid's Tale
- 8 Masculinity, gender, fatherhood
Read: Philip K. Dick, "The Father-Thing"
Film clips: Terminator 2, Star Wars
- 9 Disability and difference
Read: Ursula K. LeGuin, "The Flyers of Gy"
Film clips: X-men, ST:TNG "Loud as a Whisper"
- 10 Sexuality/Sexualities
Read: Ursula K. LeGuin, "Coming of Age in Karhide"
Film clips: ST:DSN "Rejoined"

- 11 The boundaries of humanity
Read: Robert Sheckley, "The Monsters"
Film clips: Bladerunner, ST:TNG "Best of Both Worlds"
- 12 Understanding across difference
Read: Ursula K. LeGuin, "The Building"
Film clips: Contact, ST:TNG "Darmok"
- 13 Belief and religion
Read: Jack McDevitt, "Gus"
Film clips: Dune, Star Wars
- 14 Social organization and social control
Read: Isaac Asimov, "Strikebreaker"
Film clips: The Matrix, Starship Troopers
- 15 The nature of consciousness and the mind
Read: David Marusek, "The Wedding Album"
Film clips: The Outer Limits "The Human Factor"

Required Course Material

This course has no textbook. Instead, you will be provided works of fiction (short stories) in PDF format online in eLearning.

Number & Timing of Graded Assignments

1. Daily Mini-Papers. Each day you will be expected to post on eLearning a brief commentary on that day's readings (roughly one page, typed). What strikes you as interesting about the work of fiction? How does it portray the topic that our discussion for that class will focus upon? How do you think this compares with anthropological perspectives on that same topic? Does it help us to explore human nature in a unique way? Mini-papers must be posted no later than *one hour* prior to the start of class to receive full credit.
2. Final Exam. This is a take-home final exam, which will be due one week after the last class session. The questions will require you to integrate ideas from across our various class discussions, while also referencing specific examples from the movies and works of fiction to illustrate and justify your points.

Policy on Attendance and Participation

As this is a discussion-oriented seminar, attendance and participation are crucial, and comprise one-third of your course grade. Given the extremely fast pace of a three-week interim course, there is no way to make up for a missed class. Out of the 15 class sessions, you may miss one without penalty. After that, every absence will diminish your grade. Attending but failing to participate in the discussion will also diminish your grade.

Grading Policy

Final Exam	1/3
Attendance and Participation	1/3
Mini-Papers	1/3

Policy for Making-Up Missed Course Work

1. Mini-papers are always due on eLearning one hour prior to the start of class. Since one important purpose is to help seed our discussion, their utility diminishes when they are completed late. If you post your mini-paper late, but still on the day it is due (i.e., before midnight), you will receive half credit. After that, you cannot receive credit for a missed mini-paper.
2. There is no procedure for making up the final exam. Since this is a take home exam and you have an entire week to complete it, you will still be expected to turn it in on time even if an event such as an illness intervenes.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

All acts of dishonesty in any work constitute academic misconduct. This includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of information, misrepresentations, and abetting of any of the above. The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event that academic misconduct occurs. Students should refer to the Student Affairs Handbook, which can be obtained in the Office of Student Life and Services in the Ferguson Center

Disability Policy

If you are registered with the Office of Disability Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss any course accommodations that may be necessary. If you have a disability but have not contacted the Office of Disability Services, please call 354-5175 or visit Osband Hall to register for services.