

### **Final Paper Assignment**

Your final paper will have two parts, as described in the syllabus. First, there is an ungraded assignment, a 1-2 page **letter of transmittal**. Second, there is your Fourth Paper assignment—a substantial analytical paper—for which there are 6 choices. Those students who made a B or better on the 3<sup>rd</sup> paper may choose among all 6. All other students, please choose among options 1-4.

#### **Letter of Transmittal**

Begin by looking back at all the written work you have done in the course, your class notes, and materials. Ask yourself the following questions, and compose a 1-2 page **letter of transmittal** in which you address at least something about each of the following question areas, in any order you wish. Please keep the letter of transmittal separate from the second, graded, part of your final paper.

1. As I think about what I knew at the beginning of the course—about bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states—what are a few examples of the facts I have learned that are important for a citizen of the world today?
2. What changes do I see in the way I analyze an issue or try to understand a culture? Do I see evidence (or remember examples not in my writings) of stronger cultural relativism? Stronger cross-cultural thinking? Stronger comparative ability? Stronger theoretical understanding?
3. Do I see any evidence that the course has taught me some new skills? [Reflect on working in a group, observing, interviewing, researching, and analyzing cultural information.] What did I learn by doing some preliminary anthropology? Did I learn from my mistakes? Where do I see this growth? Were there any particular turning points?
4. When I think back on my intentions with regard to this class at the beginning of the semester, how well have my intentions been met? Am I satisfied with how this course has gone?

As you finish this letter of transmittal, feel free to tell me anything about your personal circumstances or the course as a whole that you think I should know, to provide a fuller context for understanding your anthropological progress during this course.

#### **Fourth Paper Assignment**

Your final paper for 202 will give you a chance to do three things:

- Demonstrate an accurate understanding of one or more theoretical approaches in anthropology, as discussed in class and as presented in the assigned readings, and the ability to use these perspectives to critically comment on or analyze an ethnographic case from the course.
- Demonstrate your skills in comparing and contrasting ethnographic cases, using accurate summaries of authors' purposes, methods, data, and conclusions. To use what you've learned about basic anthropological terms and concepts and contrasting dimensions of culture.
- Explore a creative direction for your own personal interests as they have emerged over this semester, either through your own original anthropological analysis, further library research, observations, or interviews.

Of course, you will also want to demonstrate your ability to write excellent prose and to use correct anthropological citation format (see "Ten Common Errors...").

Though the weight of these 3 parts will vary by your individual paper's direction, part 2 is the most important part of the assignment and should carry the bulk of your attention, but it can be intertwined with parts 1 and 3. **The paper should be roughly 6 pages in length.** If you do original interviews and observations, it may be that your paper will need to run considerably longer, to allow you full scope of describing both what you did and what you found.

**1. Inequality:** Think about what we have seen with regard to economic inequality, social hierarchy, and difference in an industrial society. What are the dimensions of inequality explored by Bourgois's study of El Barrio and the Coontz article? You may also discuss the Bali case, the Sharanahua, or some other group briefly, if you wish. Relate your analysis of inequality to Roseberry's discussion of multiple perspectives on history and the different "histories" that anthropologists construct. For the creative part of this choice, you might interview some Emory students about how these issues play out at Emory or you might explore another anthropologist's take on these subjects. You also might choose to think about some other aspect of U.S. culture to which you can apply these insights.

**2. Gifts and Exchange.** We have discussed the *kula* ring in the Trobriand Islands and the role of gifts for big men and commoners. We have also explored the meaning of gifts among the Kwakiutl of the Northwest Coast of North America and the importance of reciprocity for highland Ecuadorian weavers in Agato. Discuss the cultural ecological approach to exchange and gifts (as seen in Piddocke and Johnson and Earle) and contrast it with Mauss's approach to *The Gift*. Be sure to spend some time in front of the *kula* shell valuables that are located in the display case on the ground floor of the Geosciences Building and incorporate your observations and comments into your paper. Then, turn

your understandings of gifts and exchanges to some aspect of American or Emory campus life. Perhaps you will want to use interviews to create your own ethnographic understandings to compare with these past ethnographies. Perhaps you will incorporate Bourgois's ethnography into your analysis of reciprocity.

**3. Strategies of Resistance.** Review the case of the Amazonian Kayapo and your notes about the Yanomami from the movie we saw and link these cases to the update reports we have heard in class to explore the impact of industrial society on tribal (and other) groups and their strategies of resistance. Then, draw some parallels with the strategies of resistance seen in Bourgois. You may want to think about how tribal and state-level societies offer different opportunities for resistance (and different issues about which to resist!). One option for additional research is to explore the case of the Ok Tedi dam in New Guinea and the connection between this tribal group's resistance and their alliances with international environmental groups. You can find Kirsch's work by searching under "Ok Tedi" in the *Cultural Survival* website (<http://www.cs.org>).

**4. Prestige: Alternative Views.** The functionalist perspective in anthropology (as we have seen in cultural ecology and cultural materialism) emphasizes that prestige is generally given by a society to encourage behaviors that help the society to "survive and thrive." Anthropologists from this perspective argue that people who perform behaviors that serve the welfare of the larger group are rewarded with status and prestige and are seen to uphold important societal values. The behaviors come to be rewarded because, on the macrocultural level, they are useful. Because they are rewarded, individuals do them, to gain status and other rewards. The Sharanahua echo this notion, saying that good hunters receive high prestige (and other rewards).

Anthropologists from a "culture and power" perspective (a component of postmodernism) disagree and argue that people in power determine what are prestigious behaviors, not the other way around. They point out that Siskind reports young, unmarried men are not avid hunters, are lazy and have to be urged to hunt. Though these young men would seem to benefit greatly from hunting prestige, especially to gain and secure a wife, they resist the hard work and danger of hunting. Instead, say those oriented toward a culture and power perspective, the older Sharanahua men who have achieved a secure marriage, usually with children, are the ones who hunt regularly and receive prestige from the group. They are older and more powerful, and that is what gives them status. They validate this status with their hunting prowess. They are not motivated to achieve prestige; rather, they gain prestige because they have power.

Explore these contrasting views by looking at the Kwakiutl and the Puerto Ricans of El Barrio. Be sure you use the two theoretical perspectives, and if you wish to discuss the Sharanahua some more, that is fine. You might wish to explore some other dimension of U.S. culture or another topic we have looked at in the course, as your creative component.

**5. Symbolic Meaning of Place: Quadrangles.** Explore the values and meaning embedded in our class interviews on University Quadrangles. Use the learnlink

conference as your main ethnographic source—though you can certainly supplement it if you wish—and analyze cultural meaning with regard to these important places in college life. You may wish to use Geertz’ approach to *thick description*, and perhaps other analytical tools from the course. Try to bring other cases from the course in as well.

**6. Contemporary Relevance.** Take a major, contemporary issue that is compelling to you. What have you learned in the course that helps you to understand that issue better? This question leaves you much freedom, but it also leaves you with the responsibility to show an equal depth and breadth of learning from the course as do the other options.

**Paper Due: Monday, December 11 in class.**

*To prepare for writing this paper, I suggest you make an outline for yourself that states clearly what your goals are in writing the paper—what points you wish to demonstrate and how you plan to do it. I’d also suggest that you reread all your class notes, thinking about how issues, approaches, and terminology applied to very different situations might be used in your paper. Don’t hesitate to thicken the paper with brief allusions to other parts of the course or other authors we’ve read; so long as they’re accurate, they will show your mastery of course material and your ability to think analytically.*

The Honor Code is in force during this assignment. Though you may discuss course readings, concepts, or lecture notes with other students, it is not appropriate to discuss specifics of the answers to any of these questions. Your written work should be entirely your own.

For help or discussion about the final paper, my office hours are:

Mon, 12/4, 2-3 pm

Wed, 12/6, 2-4 pm

Fri, 12/8, 10:00-10:30 am