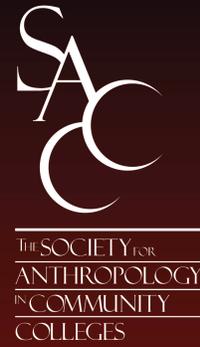


# Teaching Anthropology: SACC Notes



Volume 16, Number 2, fall 2010

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Lloyd Miller, Editor; Ann Kaupp, Assistant Editor

SACC's mission is to encourage dialogue and collaboration among teachers of anthropology across sub-disciplines and institutional settings, and to promote excellence in the teaching of anthropology. *Teaching Anthropology: SACC Notes* advances this mission by providing members with news of SACC activities, including annual meetings, and publishing articles and commentaries on teaching, research, and of general anthropological interest.

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Old Market Area



Omaha skyline

# SACCFEST 2011

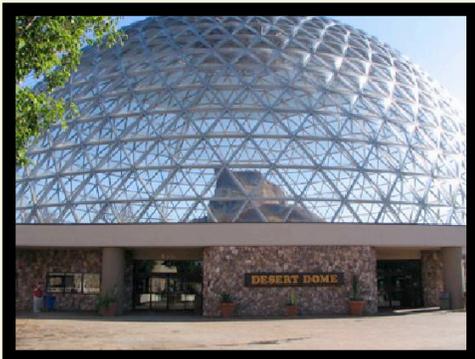
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Omaha Riverwalk

## Introduction

In his recurring column, “Archaeology Matters,” **Bob Muckle** addresses the oversaturation of the Egyptian pharaoh, King Tut, in all forms of the popular media. He thinks he’ll back off from classroom discussions of the legendary potentate until the current “King-Tut-o-mania” subsides.

The other four articles in this issue reflect a matter of increasing importance to those who teach undergraduate anthropology classes: how can I most effectively teach what I consider vital anthropological knowledge and perspectives to students with varying backgrounds and sometimes limited preparation?

At community colleges, we often get “just one crack” at students. Many who take anthropology at all will take but one course, and it is not always the general survey 101.

In his once-a-year “Peoples and Cultures of the Caribbean” course, **Frank Lagana** uses the widely popular “reggae” music as it relates to the history and culture of Jamaica to teach many of anthropology’s core principles. In his second paper, “No More Cowboys and Indians,” Frank notes that while younger students are generally less knowledgeable about Native Americans than their predecessors, they are also less hampered by old myths and stereotypes, and therefore potentially more able to view First Peoples with anthropological objectivity.

In “Teaching Anthropology: Some Strong Opinions,” **Jack Kelso** contrasts the way indigenous lay people view their own cultures—as narrowly descriptive, isolated phenomena—with the anthropological perspective of viewing a culture in the broad context of objective, cross-cultural comparisons. He then uses a Pueblo anthropologist’s *etic* description of some aspects of mainstream American culture as a possible technique for helping students get beyond their *emics* to see themselves and their culture with an anthropological perspective.

**Cynthia Ninivaggi** observes that while her students are not at all averse to cross-cultural comparisons in religion or art (among other categories), economic anthropology and exchange leave many of them unmoved. She discusses and evaluates some of her activities and resources to interest and engage students in the anthropology of economics and exchange.

Finally, **Barry Kass** reviews *The Gift of a Bride: A Tale of Anthropology, Matrimony and Murder* by Serena Nanda and Joan Gregg. He describes the book as an “engaging anthropological view of the culture of Indian Immigrants in the U.S.” as well as “a terrific murder mystery.”

*Lloyd Miller*

### Current Issues-Five-Fields Panel

SACC’s annual “Current Issues in Anthropology: Five-Fields Symposium” at the 2010 AAA meetings in New Orleans is honored to have six presenters this year. They are:

- Kathleen Barlow, *cultural* (Central Washington U),
- Barbara Mills, *archaeology* (U of Arizona),
- Michael Silverstein, *linguistics* and *sociolinguistics* (U of Chicago),
- Deborah Bolnick, *biological* and *physical* (U of Texas),
- Christine Miller, *applied* (Savanna College of Arts and Design), and
- Rebecca Starr, *linguistics* and *applied* (Tulane U).

Session 2-0715, Thursday, November 18 at 1:45 p.m.



# Archaeology Matters

a recurring column

*Bob Muckle*

The focus of popular media stories on King Tut this year...was...that he was the product of an incestuous relationship...and that his penis is apparently missing.

King Tut must be the most poked, prodded, studied, filmed, researched, talked about, made fun of and written about dead guy that has ever lived. Serious documentaries have been made about him, as have some truly horrible films. He is the subject of serious scholarly enquiry, as well as bad novels, funny songs and cheap souvenirs. He was a villain in the 1960s *Batman* television series, and one can get a King Tut ring tone on-line.

I recognize the significance of scholarly research on King Tut in multiple ways, from enhancing our understanding of ancient Egypt to providing a subject for recently emergent analytical technologies. I've long thought that the most significant thing about King Tut was the vital role he played in popularizing archaeology, beginning with the discovery of his tomb in 1922 and continuing through his incorporation into contemporary popular culture.

For all this, I have regularly discussed King Tut in my archaeology classes, but I am now inclined to stop. King-Tut-o-mania, of both the scholarly and non-scholarly kinds, seems to have reached a fever pitch in 2010, and I am oversaturated.

In 2010 alone, no fewer than three King Tut exhibits have visited the United States, including the touring "Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs" (currently in New York), "Tutankhamun the Golden King and the Great Pharaohs" (currently in Denver) and an exhibit called "Tutankhamun's Funeral" at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. A multitude of scholarly, semi-scholarly and popular reports have appeared in print, on-line and on television about his health while alive, the cause of his death and the size of his penis.

For those interested, the recent scholarly research on his health while alive is suggesting that he was probably rather sickly and weak, walked with a limp, had a club foot, cleft palate, large front incisors and an overbite. Some researchers suggest he had malaria, scoliosis, a hormonal disorder and perhaps a genetic disorder leading to under-developed genitalia.

The recent research on the cause of death rules out murder by either poison or a blow to the back of the head. Instead, a report early in the year suggested death was caused by a combination of an infection associated with a broken leg and malaria. Another study suggests sickle cell may have killed him.

As often happens, the popular media picks and chooses from the scholarly reports what is likely to resonate with their readers or viewers. Thus the focus of media stories on King Tut for much of the year was on the fact that he was the product of an incestuous relationship (revealed by DNA studies), and that his penis is apparently missing.

Regarding the penis, it was apparently there following the initial discovery in 1922, but now can't be found. The official word is that it fell off and is just not attached anymore. Since those in charge aren't producing the detached penis, conspiracy theories abound, usually suggesting that it was removed to prevent a kind of locker-room embarrassment. The topic of the missing penis went viral. Mainstream media reported on it, it was blogged about, comic/television host Stephen Colbert had several segments on the missing penis over the summer on the *Colbert Report* and Whoopi Goldberg talked about it on *The View*. While doing a bit of on-line research myself, guess what kinds of ads kept popping up? Viagra. And who knew there was a song called 'Detached Penis'? I don't recommend it. It isn't about King Tut.

Of course one can hardly ever have a discussion about King Tut without talking about "the famed curse" suggesting that anyone who violated the tomb would surely suffer and die. Most people recognize the silliness of the curse and pay it no heed. Really, there is no evidence of death by curse. One recent report shows that of the 25 people in closest contact with the tomb and the mummy itself, the average age of the deceased was 70. Howard Carter, the principal investigator who discovered the tomb at the age of 48, lived for another 17 years. Of course none of this stops the media from perpetuating the myth. It seems that every few years a



Recreation of the sarcophagus of King Tut.  
From pdphoto.org.

report of the curse of King Tut comes up, such as when a museum employee who handled some artifacts from the tomb died, even though the person was elderly, hadn't handled the artifacts for many years and had documented serious and known health issues.

It isn't widely known, but besides the famed curse resulting in death for those who disturb the tomb, there are several other less well-known but real curses of King Tut from which many of us suffer. I made them up. Here are the top five.

**The Curse of the Mummy Movie Genre.**

Within a few years of the 1922 discovery of King Tut, mummy movies began to be made. Has there ever been a good one? I think not. Well, maybe the ones with the Three Stooges, but none of the others.

**The Curse of King Tut Kitsch.** Really, some of it is really bad. One day I hope to get a King Tut bobblehead.

**The Curse of Students Watching Bad Television on King Tut.** As a result of watching bad documentaries on King Tut, many students enter my classes claiming to want to be archaeologists, but really they just have a fascination with King Tut, equating archaeology with Egyptology and with much of what they know coming from poor television.

**The Curse of Over-Hyped and Over-Priced Museum Exhibits.** I'm not sure what it is, but many people, me included, feel the need to pay lots of money to see some artifacts associated with King Tut. I've done it twice, and I don't even like museums much. One of the touring exhibits in the United States right

now will be bringing in more than 100 million dollars in admissions.

**The Curse of Zahi Hawass.** Hawass is the "Secretary General of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities." What kind of title is that? Sounds like the title somebody who wanted to be viewed as important or famous would make up—if he or she were 12. Hawass appears to be in charge of everything ancient in Egypt, is front and center on anything to do with King Tut, and has an ego the size of the Great pyramid. I'm not saying he is a jerk, but there is a Facebook group called "Zahi Hawass Is An Idiot."

I actually feel a bit bad about saying anything negative about King Tut. I really have long been a fan. I used to have a large poster of Tut's death mask. Steve Martin's Saturday Night Live performance of the song "King Tut" backed up by the Toot Uncommons (members of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band) is among the funniest few minutes of television I have ever seen. And, the only book in my "Old" book collection is *The Tomb of Tutankhamen, Discovered by the Late Earl of Carnarvon and Howard Carter*, by Howard Carter and A.C. Mace, published in 1923 when analysis had barely begun.

I'm hoping that as the current hoopla over King Tut subsides, I will once again be able to talk about King Tut at length in my classes. I think it would be useful to use King Tut as a case study in archaeology: to show how archaeological field and laboratory methods evolve; how interpretations change over time; how technology is applied in analysis, how archaeologists reconstruct ecological, social, and ideological aspects of cultures; how we make inferences of health and disease; how archaeology can be situated within the contexts of politics and popular culture; and more. But I can't do that yet.

As the Tut exhibitions wind down and the people get tired of the popular, trashy and sex-related stories, I think I may be able to talk about King Tut again. I hope. *7A*

*History: special people  
in special places at special times.  
Anthropology: everyone else  
the rest of the time.*

Katrina Worley, 1997

## ***Don't You Hear the News Flash? Using the Popular Music of Jamaica in a Caribbean Studies Class***

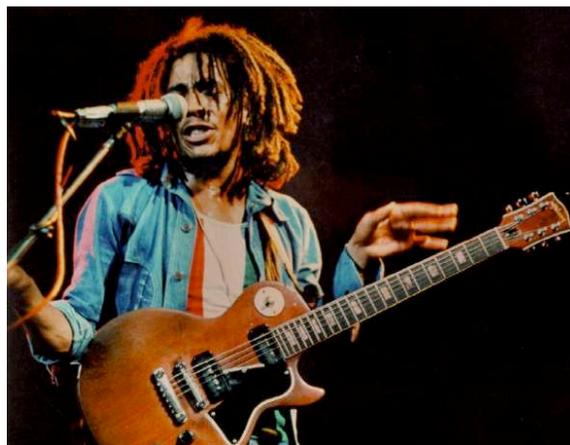
**Frank Lagana**

Since 1987, I've taught a once-a-year anthropology course called "Peoples and Cultures of the Caribbean" at a two-year college in New York City. The course is not required for any of the various degrees or certificate programs at the college and has no prerequisites. For most of the students who take the course (always the maximum of 40), this will be their first and only exposure to anthropology. For the past few years I've been experimenting with using Caribbean popular music, especially the music of Jamaica, as a sort of alternative text, as a starting point for students learning about the history and cultures of the Caribbean at the same time that they learn how to think like anthropologists.

Over the past fifty years, the popular music of Jamaica—what the rest of the world calls "reggae"—has been a direct link to the history of the Jamaican people and their culture. This is, of course, true of all popular music, but it's especially true of Jamaican music for a number of reasons.

One factor is the organization of the Jamaican music industry, at least from its beginnings in the 1950s into the 1980s. The music during that time was never a corporate product; the corporate music industry has never quite figured out what to do with reggae, except to turn it into something that was no longer quite Jamaican. The men (and the occasional woman) who were the main figures during the formative period of the industry were, for the most part, small-time local entrepreneurs. Without really knowing what they were doing, they created both a new industry and a new genre of popular music, one that has by now become familiar to listeners all over the world.

Jamaican music has also had an important influence on popular music in many different places; there is, for example, a direct line that connects Jamaican music to the hip-hop and rap culture of today. These local businessmen were not about to get rich from the music; the local market was, after all, less than 2 million people in 1960. No one really thought about taking the music beyond Jamaica, except perhaps to the Jamaican diaspora communities in England and the United States. These founding ancestors of the Jamaican music industry, most of them not even musicians themselves, were Jamaicans producing music for a local audience, a notoriously critical and



Robert Nesta Marley

impatient audience. The same thing was largely true of the musicians who actually created the music.

Another factor was the way in which Jamaicans consumed music. The music industry on the island (still a British colony until 1962) began at a time when many Jamaicans did not yet have electricity, let alone a turntable or radio. When transistor radios became more widely available, even if it was just the one down at the local rum shop, the only radio station on the island followed the BBC model of colonial respectability. Music by local artists was not on the play list unless it had been classified (and neutralized) with the label of "folk music." As a result, most Jamaicans, especially the urban poor in the capital city of Kingston, got their music through the uniquely Jamaican institution of the sound system. The idea was simple: an enterprising businessman with a taste for music acquired a supply of records (for most of the 1950s these were R&B records from the states), a couple of turntables, and as powerful a set of amplifiers and speakers as he could afford. These mobile discotheques brought the music directly into the ghetto neighborhoods of Kingston. Most of the main figures in the early Jamaican recording industry were themselves sound system operators who needed a reliable source of local music to supplement and eventually replace the R&B from the states, which by the late 1950s was changing into a style not much appreciated by Jamaicans.

These were men like Duke Reid (a former policeman turned liquor store owner), Clement



“Coxsone” Dodd (a former migrant farm worker who eventually became the owner of Studio One, the legendary recording studio of the 1960s and the place where, at least according to some people, reggae itself was invented), and the man who called himself Prince Buster (a former boxer and ghetto tough guy). There was a great deal of competition among the major sound systems (competition that often resulted in violence), and sound system operators by the late 1950s needed their own exclusive recordings to keep the crowds coming to their dances. Most early recordings were produced primarily for use by a particular sound system and only secondarily, if at all, with the idea of record sales. This intense competition resulted in an ever-escalating amount of locally recorded music, at first mostly music in the R&B style but within a few years music with a very distinctively Jamaican sound, the music known as “ska.” Ska (which ruled the dance halls just around the time Jamaica got its independence) was music that took American jazz and R&B and transformed them by using rhythms borrowed from some of the Afro-Jamaican revival churches. The rhythms of ska match the rhythms of revivalists as they chant themselves into possession states.

As a result, there was a very direct connection between the creators of the music and the dancehall crowd (anyone who’s spent a long night at a Jamaican sound system event will agree that the word audience is not quite appropriate). Even when record sales became significant, the sound systems remained at the center of the industry and introduced most of the important musical innovations (they’re still important today). Any artist looking for success in Jamaica had to start by impressing the very critical dancehall crowd.



Because the music industry in Jamaica first developed around the sound systems, the music has always been closely attuned to what was happening on the streets and to changes in the popular mood. And since the urban poor of Kingston were the focus of the sound systems, it was this audience that had the greatest influence on the direction of the music. For example, I discuss the context for the rise of the so-called “roots” music of the 1970s, a term used for music with a strong Rastafarian and Afro-Centric content. Roots music became popular at just the same time that the Rasta movement in Jamaica was making the transition from a generally despised and outcast cult into a social and political movement that seemed for a time to be on the verge of transforming the consciousness of the urban poor of Jamaica.<sup>1</sup> This development in the music took place in a wider context: the coming to power in 1972 of a socialist government that had used both Rasta and reggae in its successful electoral campaign, the influence of black power ideologies from the states (Rastas in Jamaica had been preaching a mystical version of black power since the 1930s), and a resurgence of African consciousness among the urban poor.

1 (Even as recently as the 1960s Rastafarians were still sometimes forcibly committed to mental hospitals for no other reason than that they were Rastafarians; as far as the authorities were concerned, anyone espousing the divinity of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I had to be insane).

On the other hand, the virtually overnight disappearance of this Rastafarian-drenched music in the late 1970s and its replacement by what Jamaicans called “slackness” (lyrics with a highly erotic content) coincided with eight years of democratic socialism in Jamaica that resulted in a virtual collapse of civic order (itself largely the result of a deliberate campaign of destabilization by the U.S. government). Anyone paying attention to this end of the decade shift in the music would not have been at all surprised by the election of a conservative government in 1980 (after an electoral campaign that took the lives of over 800 people).

I use the music of Jamaica as a starting point for introducing the holistic perspective in anthropology, something to which that every introductory textbook gives at least lip service. Jamaican music gives me a chance to show that no one part of a culture is separate from any other part. I can trace the connections between the music and so many other aspects of Jamaican history and culture. Even technological change is brought into the discussion: it’s a very long way from the two track reel-to-reel tape machines that most of the early music was recorded on to the computer-generated rhythms that dominate the dancehall culture of today’s Jamaica. Technological change, for example, was responsible for the development of the branch on the family tree of Jamaican music called “dub.” As recording equipment got more sophisticated, sound engineers were able to take a song, deconstruct it into its several parts and then, after running it all through a variety of sound processors and filters, reconstruct it into something entirely new. This could be done over and over again with one single song (what Jamaicans call “versioning”). One of the innovators in dub was the man known as King Tubby, not himself a musician but an electronics wizard who operated his own sound system.

I also use the music as an example of what Caribbean scholars call the “creolisation process,” an idea that’s the organizing theme of the course. The concept of being Creole, a person more of the new world than the old, had its beginnings in the Caribbean. Creolisation, however, was much more than a simple mechanical blending process. It always involved a variety of responses to the experience of upheaval, loss and migration that was the common experience of most

of the different peoples who came to the Caribbean after 1492. That experience was most widely shared by the five million or so enslaved Africans who were transported across the Atlantic to grow sugarcane, turn it into sugar and make Europeans rich. Some of these immigrants imitated their new masters. Some tried to hang on to whatever fragments they could remember from their past lives. Some borrowed from the various people they were thrown together with and some took what they had learned and reinterpreted it. And there were those few who were able to create something new out of the chaos of the Caribbean experience. All of these responses can be seen and heard in the past fifty years of Jamaican music.

So many different Jamaicas exist beyond the tropical paradise that the casual tourist sees. The country is split along several major fault lines: race, class, language, religion and politics, the same kinds of splits seen throughout the Caribbean. The family tree of Jamaican music has branches that connect it to all of these different points of conflict. Remember that the main audience for the sound systems was (and still is) the urban poor. So it’s uptown versus downtown as Jamaicans put it: light skin versus dark skin, Europe versus Africa, proper English versus Patwa and British colonial respectability versus the culture of the ghetto. In the 1970s the Jamaican elite was outraged by the Rasta themes in the music, just as it had earlier been outraged by the late 1960s spate of songs praising the rude boys of the ghetto. Today it’s the culture of dancehall that has the elite up in arms. Last semester in class, for example, an older man from Guyana claimed in class that the dancehall music of young people today is an insult to Caribbean people. He argued that West Indians are conservative and respectable people who are capable of much more than just “jumping and whining.”

I also use Jamaican music to discuss the post-modern phenomenon of local cultures being transformed into global commodities. A very good example of this, and one that even most of my non-Caribbean students are familiar with, is the career of Robert Nesta Marley, the one man most responsible for bringing Jamaican music to an international audience. I tell the story, with his music as a guide, of Marley’s transformation from one of hundreds of ghetto youths trying to claw their way up the ladder of the music



industry into an international rock star. Marley was then posthumously turned into a Rastafarian apostle of peace and love whose songs are now used in Jamaican tourist board ads (this is the same man who once sang "I feel like bombing a church"). By the late 1970s, when Marley had become a musical and spiritual icon to listeners all over the world, his music was scarcely heard in the dancehalls of Jamaica. He was, to be sure, respected and loved, but the music itself was no longer Jamaican.

Finally, I use the roots music of the 1970s to introduce the topic of Rastafarian culture, or at least those aspects of it that I experienced during my fieldwork in Jamaica thirty or so years ago. Rastafarian elements had already insinuated themselves into the music years before roots music came to rule the dancehalls. In the early 1960s, for example, Prince Buster produced a single by the name of "Oh Carolina" that caused outrage among the Jamaican elite when it actually was played on the radio. Buster had used a Rastafarian drumming ensemble, Count Ozzie and the Mystic Revelation of Rastafari, to provide the backing rhythm for the track. The drummers played in the Nyabinghi or buru drum style, drumming closely associated with Rastas, which in turn derived from a number of much older African influence drumming styles. The idea that Rasta had become respectable was too much for some Jamaicans to bear.

However, this Rastafarian influence stayed for the most part muted in the music, as it was in the society at large. Some producers in the 1960s even refused to hire Rastafarian musicians to work on their sessions. The increasing influence of roots music on the dancehall was itself a reflection of the growing strength of Rasta in the urban ghettos. At the same time, the music brought Rasta ideology to a much broader segment of the population than was ever possible in the past. The music became filled with images of fire and destruction raining down on Babylon. Its focus on Afrocentric themes, its calls for black empowerment and its prophecies of apocalyptic change (all themes that Rastas had been preaching since the 1930s) suddenly seemed to fit the popular mood, a mood that reached almost millennial fervor with its expectations of "better must come." That was the title of a song played at campaign rallies for Michael Manley's Peoples National Party, the winner of the 1972 election. Manley, called "Joshua" by his supporters, even brandished at rallies a walking stick that he claimed Selassie himself had given him during a trip to Ethiopia. Manley called the walking stick his "rod of correction," and it just may have been that connection with Ethiopia that won his party the election that year.

In short, the music of Jamaica is used to teach something about both anthropology and the Caribbean. It certainly gets students' attention and lets them know that anthropology is all about the textures of everyday life as lived by ordinary people. I also use other genres of Caribbean music, especially Afro-Cuban music and the music of Trinidad, to discuss the different patterns of creolisation that have shaped music and cultures throughout the region. As academics, we have a great deal of competition for our students increasingly limited attention spans. Using popular music is one way of keeping them interested. 74

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## **No More Cowboys and Indians! Teaching a Native American Studies Course to 21<sup>st</sup> Century Students.**

**Frank Lagana**

Since I've made the decision that I'm going to retire at the end of the fall semester, I find myself looking back on my years of teaching and thinking about the changes I've seen, especially the changes in the kinds of students I've taught. This paper offers some thoughts on 38 years of teaching a course called "North American Indians" at Queensborough Community College in New York City. I think I can safely assume that most of us have taught a similar course at one time or another.

Queensborough is one of the 23 different campuses that make up the City University of New York system. Close to a quarter of a million students take classes at CUNY. For the Fall 2009 semester, Queensborough had more than 15 thousand full and part-time students enrolled in a variety of academic and certificate courses, the latter including everything from fiber optics technology to massage therapy. The six year graduation rate is about 26%, a statistic that the folks in the administration building seem to think is something worth patting themselves on the back for. And, with the new ideology of assessment sweeping through the higher education managerial class, more and more of those folks every year send out an endless stream of new templates and do their best to figure out new ways of interfering with what we do in the classroom, all the while sprouting platitudes that could have come out of a 1970s pop psychology book.

Anthropology at Queensborough is one of the nine different disciplines included in the Department of Social Sciences (although some people in other departments persist in referring to us as the Department of Social Studies). When I started at Queensborough,

there were three full-time anthropologists and several adjuncts. As the only anthropologist in the department for some 20 years now, I've gotten used to colleagues popping their heads into my office and to ask "is there any culture where.....?" (you can fill in the blanks). We seem still to be regarded as the experts in the trivia and exotica of human social life.

The general profile of Queensborough students is probably not all that different from those of students at other large urban community colleges today. For one thing, many of our students come from first- or second-generation immigrant families. The borough of Queens has been cited as probably the most ethnically diverse urban area in the country. Queensborough students come from over 130 countries. About 60% of them report that a language other than English is spoken at home. Too many of our students begin with serious deficiencies in what we would think of as basic academic skills. More than 70% of our incoming students require at least one

remedial course, and more than 15% of them need remediation in reading, writing and math. They tend to show a distinct lack of enthusiasm (sometimes verging on outright contempt) for anything they perceive as intellectual. They are post-modernists without knowing it: everything is relative and one belief is as good as any other. What we think of as knowledge, many of my students see as merely our "opinions." They are immersed in the culture of celebrity and absorbed in their digital devices.

The North American Indians course<sup>1</sup> is not required for any of the various programs at Queensborough and that's true of all three anthropology courses currently offered. Beyond



<sup>1</sup> No one has ever taken seriously my attempts to have the title of the course changed. "If we don't have the word 'Indian' in it, how will they know what it's about?" is the answer I usually get.

passing a 9th grade reading test, the course has no prerequisites. For most of the 40 or so students who wind up in the course every semester, this is likely to be their first and only exposure to anthropology. And with the more than 20% increase in enrollment over the past few semesters, I'm finding that many of the students are there either because it was the only class left open at registration or because they were put there by counselors who seem to be less concerned with student interests and abilities than with filling seats to increase the number of full-time equivalency students and qualify for more money from the city and state. In the stories I tell in class, using the native peoples of North America as the focus, I try to teach students something about what it means to think like an anthropologist.

Since I started teaching the course in 1973, images of native peoples in American popular culture have changed in a number of ways. These changes have an impact on why students take the course in the first place and, more importantly, on the kinds of ideas about native peoples that students bring with them to class. I've always thought that it's important for a teacher, especially an anthropologist, to be aware of students' mental maps. We need to think of our students ethnographically; there are some very big gaps between instructors' conceptual worlds and those of our students.

Of course, images of the people called "Indians" have been going through cycles of change now for more than 500 years, ever since Columbus wrote his letters to the king of Spain in 1493 on his way home from the Caribbean. These letters contained two very different views of native peoples, a dualism that would characterize Euro-American perceptions for the next several centuries. At the same time that the Admiral was praising the Taino of the Caribbean for their gentle nature, their sweet-sounding language and their generosity, he was also speculating how easy it would be to enslave them.

Perceptions of First Nations people by Europeans and their descendants have always had much more to do with Euro-American needs and anxieties than with anything about native peoples and cultures themselves. Whether it was the savage or the noble savage—Hobbes versus Rousseau—Euro-Americans have constructed images of Indians for a variety of their own reasons. These images often functioned as counterpoints to Europeans' images of themselves. What Europeans saw when they looked into the mirror, whether positive or negative, they displaced the opposite onto the people they called Indians. The Indian only existed in relationship to Europeans.



Montana Black Feet tribe wins record settlement from the US government.

This has certainly been true in the history of American anthropology, so long synonymous with the study of native peoples (our own colonized people). Lewis Henry Morgan, for example, used (or misused) the five Iroquois Nations to validate his 19th century schemes of cultural evolution. For much of the 20th century, American anthropologists used native peoples and cultures to prove or disprove various theories about culture. The field of archaeology has had some ideological overtones in the various debates about New World prehistory. It's certainly no coincidence that the Pleistocene Overkill Theory became a subject of discussion at just about the same time that the modern environmental movement was taking root in American society. Humans here were seen as just one more invasive species responsible for massive environmental change. The Clovis First Theory, so long the ruling paradigm in American archaeology, also had its ideological aspects: The story (and a very male-centered story at that) of a small group of humans armed with a superior technology sweeping their way through the continent, seems like an echo of the story of European settlement here. Clovis First became almost a statement of patriotism (which may explain

why, for a long time, many North American archaeologists paid almost no attention to what archaeologists in South America were learning about prehistory).

So what about the 21st century students who take my course? What sorts of ideas about the people they grew up calling Indians do they bring to class? It seems to me that most of them have come of age in a culture where the old stories about Indians have largely lost their power. What I'm seeing in the past 10 years or so is that more and more students come into my class with little or no idea of what the term "American Indian" means and just as little an idea of the role that native peoples have played in American history. If they think of Indians at all, it's likely to be as operators of gambling casinos. The names that had such a powerful resonance to students at other times, names like Custer, Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Tecumseh, Cochise and Geronimo, may as well be the names of characters from the Peloponnesian War.

If, as I suggested, images of Indians have always had much more to do with the needs of Euro-Americans, then perhaps we've arrived at a time when we no longer need the image of the Indian either to praise or to condemn ourselves. My students of the past may not have had the vocabulary to talk about it, but most of them did have at least a sense of that 500-year old savage versus noble savage argument.

What's happened to account for this amnesia about native peoples? Why has the Indian virtually exited off the stage of our consciousness and that of our students?

For one thing, the idea of the frontier, a defining theme of American history and culture since the beginning, has finally faded beyond memory. There are no new worlds to discover over the next mountain range, no new Jerusalem for God's chosen people to create, and no more children of nature to stand in the way of manifest destiny. The Indian was always a central part of the frontier story, a living reminder of the savage wilderness that our founding ancestors had to overcome. Without a frontier, do we need Indians?

On the level of popular culture, the frontier story found its fullest expression in the Western, a staple of TV and film for most of the 20th century. Whether it was the crude Cowboys and Indian films of the first half of the century, or the revisionist films of the 60s and 70s like "Little Big Man," several generations of Americans saw the noble versus noble savage story, the good Indian versus the bad Indian, played out over and over again on the screen. For better or worse, the Indian has virtually disappeared from TV and the movies over the past decade and a half.

There's another factor worth mentioning. When I began teaching the course, the influence of the 1960s counterculture had finally made its way into white working class culture, the social class that most of my students came from. From its beginnings in the Bay Area in the mid-60s, the counterculture gave the Indian a central role in its critique of mainstream American culture. The Indian became elevated into a model of spiritual and ecological virtue, a counterpoint to everything about mainstream culture that the counterculture rejected.

Once again, just as Euro-Americans had been doing so long, the Indian became hijacked in the name of an ideal culture that never existed. For most of the 70s and into the 80s, the class was filled with students who, inspired by the ideals of the counterculture, took the course looking for some sort of enlightenment, whether it was spiritual, environmental or psychedelic. They were hoping to find that enlightenment through learning about native peoples and cultures. They assumed that native peoples had something valuable to teach them about how to live their lives. Many of them had also been influenced by the political activism of the time and saw what had happened to native peoples in American history as one more example of everything that had been left out of their history books. That sort of student has just about vanished from class, vanished along with the last remnants of the counterculture (except in aging baby boomers).

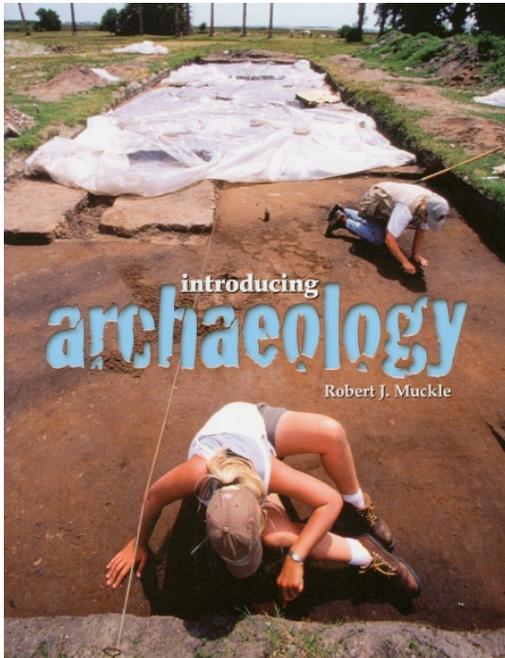
So what does this all mean for someone who teaches a Native American studies course to today's community college students? For one thing, I don't think that we can count on the course having the same kind of appeal to students that it once did. Selling the course to students becomes much harder for us. Students today have grown up in a culture where the images of native peoples that were such a part of my culture have just about disappeared.

On the other hand, I'd also like to think that this new generation of students challenges us to tell the story of native peoples and cultures in new ways. The fact that my students do not come into class loaded down with all of that ideological baggage is actually liberating for us as anthropologists. We don't have to worry about deconstructing all of those myths and illusions and outright lies from the past. We can finally talk about native peoples as human beings on their own terms, not in terms of what we wish them to be. *TA*

*Everybody is entitled to his own opinion  
but not his own facts.*

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan

## **TWO by MUCKLE**

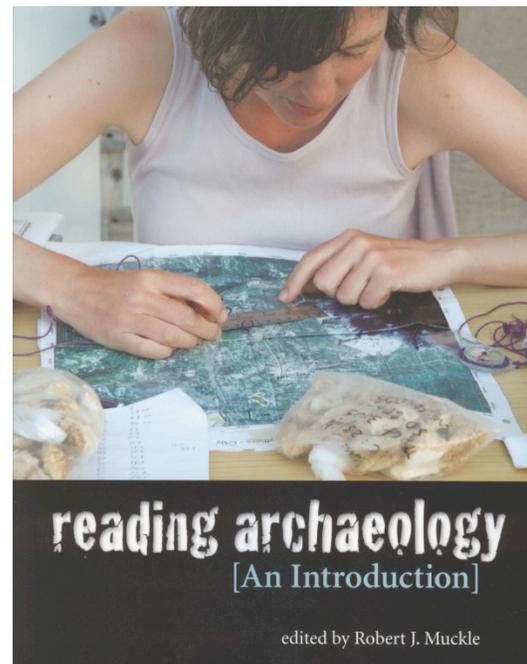


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*Introducing Archaeology* is a concise and economical text designed for first-year archaeology courses.

***Reading Archaeology: An Introduction.*** edited by Robert J. Muckle. University of Toronto Press, 2008

Designed as a supplement to introductory texts in archaeology, *Reading Archaeology* offers selections from scholarly journals and books as well as from semi-scientific periodicals and the popular press. Readings are based on their potential to stimulate student interest and introduce a diversity of archaeological literature in all its major forms.



## **Teaching Anthropology: Some Strong Opinions**

**Jack Kelso**

Recently a former student stopped me at a supermarket to tell me how he remembered taking my introductory course in physical anthropology. Though the course could be used to fulfill an undergraduate college science requirement he remembered that for him it had a spiritual aspect which, now years later, he really appreciated. That was news to me. It reminded me, however, of what an odd thing teaching really is. When I was teaching, I took for granted that I was giving students information they could acquire and take with them when the course was over. It was like I was filling their intellectual gas tanks with information enabling them somehow to cover a few more miles on the road of life.

But on thinking further, the student's comment made it clear to me that that was not what I was really doing, nor was it what the students were doing. Teaching is not like filling up the tank at a gas station; actually it's basically story telling. Professors of anthropology, perhaps professors of anything short of technical skill sets, are storytellers. Our presentations are fundamentally texts presented as truth about the real world. We change the stories over time; the stories our colleagues tell are different from those we ourselves tell and the orthodox versions of our professions' stories shift on the sands of time. Every story expresses the professor's history and every student converts the classroom experience into a mental sketch of his or her own. Students come to class with a unique configuration of personal experience that they use to process what comes their way. Professors interact with the processors. Professors—both good and bad teachers—influence students, but neither students nor professors control the actual effect of that influence. It comes as the product of interaction between the two. Teaching and learning are locked together in a continuous two-step dance, and it's only the dance that matters.

I loved teaching anthropology, though I cannot imagine what the experience must be like now because so much has changed since I taught my last class 14 years ago. But now that I know what I was really doing, I would like to go back in time to tell stories that would bring anthropology closer to the everyday

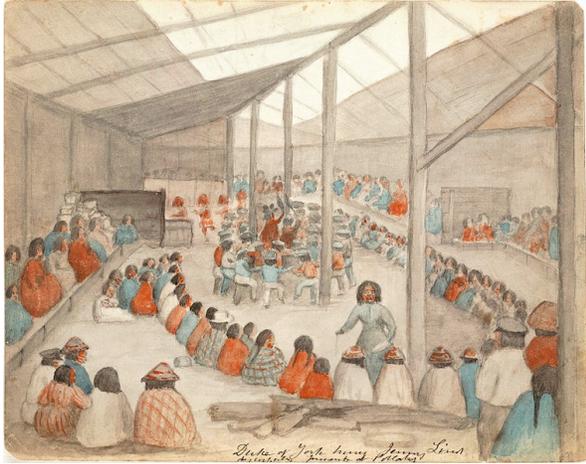
lives of students. Though it defines itself as the study of humankind, students seldom expect anthropology to have anything important to tell them about themselves. I would still tell stories about ancestors and others but this time I would bring the content closer to the lives of students. To achieve this I would call attention to the way anthropologists explain some of the puzzling discoveries they describe in their classes, and compare it to the way we often explain analogous situations in our everyday lives.

When anthropologists encounter something of interest—a ceremony, an adaptation or a custom that seems unique,

odd or puzzling—they look for factors in the surrounding natural or cultural contexts that make its occurrence plausible. Contextualizing takes raw knowledge that is not obviously understandable and provides plausible explanations. The road from knowledge to understanding, though it may not be the autobahn to prosperity or improved self-esteem, does provide a kind of satisfaction (occasionally it can even yield the exquisite pleasure of an “ah hah” experience). Taking such a path moves us from a simple description of the discovery to the larger context in which it takes place. Meaning resides in context. Let me illustrate how providing a larger context can supply a plausible explanation to our knowledge of the interesting, if puzzling, custom called the potlatch.

The potlatch provides an especially striking example of a seemingly outlandish practice made more readily understandable when placed in a larger context. The ceremony occurs among the indigenous populations of the Northwest coast of North America, an area extending from Alaska in the north down through coastal British Columbia and reaching as far south as northern California. The region is a rain forest that during good years provides these hunter-gatherers with a surplus of resources. These include salmon runs and other fish from the rivers, sea mammals and salt water fish as well as a variety of other critters from the shore and ocean, wood and game animals from the forests for warmth, cooking, animal protein and the materials needed for preserving food as well as for carving canoes, utensils, weapons, totem poles and tools.

***Professors of anthropology,  
perhaps professors of anything  
short of technical skill sets,  
are storytellers.***



Klallam potlatch (Port Townsend, WA), watercolor by James Gilchrist Swan, 1859

The abundant resources in the region enabled the residents to support large populations in some locations compared to many other hunter-gatherers around the world. The most striking feature of the potlatch ceremony consisted, in aboriginal times, of giving away or publicly destroying the possessions of the host—a chief with entitlements from his kin—to the assembled gathering of his relatives who had been invited to attend and participate in the ceremony. Imagine giving your possessions away to your kinfolk! This of course was appalling to missionaries, explorers and eventually to the early settlers from the world of Western culture, raised to regard their possessions as their wealth, something to be acquired, the source of security, prestige and privilege, kept in a safe place and, whenever possible, increased. This was so appalling indeed that the newcomers to the region persuaded the Canadian and United States' authorities to outlaw the ceremony in both countries.

The people of the potlatch lived in an ideological world very different from ours. They had no concept of private ownership, personal property or wealth, as we think of it in a capitalist democracy. We may have an image in our minds of hunter-gatherers as on the edge of survival all the time, but that's not the case. Survival requires access to food, protection from the elements, predators and enemies, and, in the case of hunter-gatherers, a close-knit kinship group consisting of individuals who can be counted upon for cooperation and mutual aid. Among the Native Americans of the Northwest Coast, the kinship group is large and consists of subgroups spread out over a region. From time to time a chief will invite the members of his kin group to attend a potlatch that, with singing, dancing and feasting, resembles a family reunion. However, those invited know well that they

will both receive gifts and become obliged to return the favor in the future with gifts to the chief.

In this way the potlatch may be seen as a cultural device that enhances the survival for all during occasional widespread and frequent local shortages. Food and other resources move up and down the hierarchy in a continuous process of reciprocal giving and reciprocating. Paraphrasing Tylor's explanation for the universality of the incest taboo, kin groups among these people either redistributed resources by potlatching or they died out.

The story offers a plausible explanation for a ceremony that seems on the surface to us as senseless if not foolish. Plausibility may be as far as anthropology—perhaps as far as any of the social and behavioral sciences—can reach to explain anything. If plausibility is the limit, then we can expect much more of what we already encounter: ambiguity, incompleteness, uncertainty and contradictions.

Even so, explaining the potlatch, while to a degree satisfying in its way, is not the main reason for bringing up a rather lengthy illustration. The main reason for discussing the potlatch is because it gives us a key that we can use to open the study of anthropology for students and make it relevant to their lives today. The larger context takes us to cause and effect: the potlatch is the effect of a kinship structure based on reciprocity within an unpredictable natural environment that from time to time fluctuates between abundance and relative scarcity. Gift giving is actually widespread among preliterate peoples. The potlatch ceremony displays features that combine to make it unique, though similar to a process common among the aborigines of the Pacific islands.

As it happens, we typically avoid looking for the larger context when it comes to explaining many of our own activities. We are instead usually satisfied with a narrow personal explanation, one that goes no further than identifying the person's choice as the reason why something happens. The limitations of a personal explanation would be obvious, for example, if a potlatch ceremony were simply explained by stating that it happened because the chief decided to have one. Of course that would be true, but as we have seen, it's not the larger context—it's the only context—and therefore empty as an explanation. There's always someone who decides—always someone to name as the cause—because there are always individual choices. However, some—perhaps most—of our choices express the continuous pressure of experience acting upon us of which we may or may not be aware. Making choices may be seen as the way in which the forces of experience express themselves in human behavior. Most of our everyday choices deserve no



Pueblo Indians :: Making Pottery

more attention than a personal explanation, but when the choice involves an event that would seem incongruous or puzzling to outsiders, there may be more to learn from the phenomenon than simply the name of the person who commits the act.

In brief, then, we commonly explain some aspects of our own behavior in a way that is decidedly different from the way we explain the behavior of others who lead lives very different from our own. The purpose of the course I might wish to teach now would be to offer the alternative to the way we commonly explain certain of our choices and their effects, a way consistent with how anthropologists (and other social and behavioral scientists) seek the larger context as the source of the choices we make. Some of our students will resist looking at themselves from a different perspective, though I suspect the better part of their resistance comes from lethargy, not an easy obstacle to overcome, I imagine. Some resistance may also come from the notion that looking for causes beyond the person amounts to letting someone off the hook for her or his choice. This alone raises an interesting question: where does the hook come from? To answer that question requires an exploration of the larger context.

How is it possible to see ourselves in the same way we see others? We cannot see ourselves through the eyes of someone else, nor can an anthropologist trained within our culture ever become an outsider looking in. This obvious axiom reaches its most egregious form when members of a subgroup become the expert anthropologists on their own subgroup. In this instance, though we know that objectivity can never be realized, we license as experts those most likely to be biased. The assumption appears to be that it takes one to know one, when that one is precisely the one who cannot know what an anthropologist is expected to know. Unless we are fiction writers, what value is there to seeing ourselves as we see ourselves? How then can we manage to see ourselves as an anthropologist might see us?



Pueblo Indians :: Around the Council Fire

Today, many Pueblo Indians live and work away from their ancestral villages, but even now many among them find our cultural ways hard to fathom. To compensate for some of the changes this out-migration has produced, I further imagine the culture of the visiting anthropologist as it was at the end of the Second World War and before the interstate super highways were built. These people have been unusually successful at keeping the secret aspects of their culture from curious outsiders such as visiting anthropologists. Yet we know enough about them to make some assumptions about their differences from our culture. What would an ethnographer from such a culture at around the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century discover about us in the here and now that could be as puzzling to her people as the potlatch was to early settlers along the Northwest Coast?

Here are a few things I imagine she would be sure to tell her people:

“Everything is different. The most conspicuous differences can be found in their extraordinarily advanced technology, their loss of community, the role of religion in their lives and the high value they place on acquiring wealth. Here then are a few specifics:

1. “The spirit world permeates all aspects of our everyday lives and we have kept our beliefs secret so as to protect and strengthen our identity as a people and keep it from contamination from outside influences. Most of these people who live outside our culture believe in one God who sits in judgment on their lives in a place accessible only to those who obey his commandments. Their God avenges those who do not keep His commandments by condemning them to an eternity of agony. Further, their God arranged for His only Son to live among them for a time and to be executed for their redemption! At times their God is soft, compassionate and forgiving; at other times He is angry, mean and vengeful. He’s just like some of them!”

2. “Our relatives are many and make up the community that supports us and defines for us the

group to which we owe our allegiance and support. Kinship in their world plays a minor role, the number of relatives is small and the ties between relatives are frequently and easily broken. When food or other resources become scarce we rely on kin to help us through; at such times these moderns often feel shame for their misfortune and rely on something they call charity and on subsidies from government organizations."

3. "In the past our resources were sometimes scarce and unable to support life for everyone producing at times hardship, starvation and the necessity to move away. Though these moderns produce plenty of food, they seem readily able to let some of their members go hungry and without shelter."

4. "To sustain our community we require conformity whereas they tolerate a wide range of diverse beliefs and disruptive behaviors with the effect of splitting them into sub-groups often intolerant of others. They live with the continuous presence of internal conflict and perpetual warfare."

5. "We honor and respect our elders for their experience, their place in our history and for their wisdom. These others regard their "seniors" as burdensome, obsolete and expensive. They separate them from the young to dwell among strangers who are like themselves and in places where people tell them what to do."

6. "Our elders tell us about the journey our ancestors took as they responded to challenges caused by nature or by attacks upon them from people who wanted what they had. Academic specialists tell their histories and fail to capture the interest of most of their people. Our history keeps our past in the present; theirs takes place in the past and rarely connects up with the present."

7. "There is so much more to tell, so many contrasts between our culture and theirs, and I have not even mentioned the role of money. Also, I discovered that many of these people live alone. I wonder how they can tolerate it."



Pueblo women, from Stoddard, John. *John Stoddard's Lectures* - Volume Ten. Chicago: George L. Shuman & Co., 1911.

But these give us a first impression of how different our outlook, how different our everyday life, is from theirs."

To the anthropologist from another culture these differences might be hard to explain to her own people, but the contrast could be of interest to students today as well as a challenge for them to explain. Do these others have anything to teach us beyond their own stories? We persons of modern technology, embedded in democratic political institutions and more or less free enterprise economies, have no wish "to return to the days of yesteryear" and could not do so even if we wanted to. We simply cannot get there from here. But the comparisons afford us a glimpse of how different we are when seen from the perspective of others. They could lead us to speculate how it all came about and in particular to wonder if our ways could be sustained. How might the Pueblo Indian proceed to find the larger context for these conditions that seem so odd to her and yet not at all peculiar to us? This is where the study of anthropology provides important insights into who we are. *TA*

#### Elegant insults from an era preceding the overuse of four-letter words

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend... If you have one."

- George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill

"Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second... If there is one."

- Winston Churchill, in response..

## COLLEGE OF DUPAGE OFFERS COURSE IN EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

Brian Kleeman, External Relations (May 10, 2010)

**Felipe Armas**, assistant professor of psychology, and **Alexander Bolyanatz**, professor of anthropology, discovered they had a mutual interest in evolutionary psychology and decided to create a special topics course in 2007. Since then, the class has filled up almost every time it has been offered.

“One concern from some of our colleagues was that the course content level would be too difficult for a community college,” Armas said. “We didn’t think this was the case and the course has proven to be very successful.”

Evolutionary psychology is the study of human behavior from an evolutionary perspective. Bolyanatz said it helps explain why people do what they do.

“It starts from the perspective that many of the things that we do are based on the fact that we’re mammals, and natural selection has shaped our brains, making our minds a product of evolution,” he said. “Both anthropology and psychology capture the intellectual roots of evolutionary psychology. It started as an attempt to look at the mind, developing from data sets and theories borrowed from anthropological research.”

Armas said that even in psychology, people see how natural selection has shaped their bodies but then try to explain human behavior as if evolution stops at the neck.

“Like any organ in the body, the brain is a product of evolution,” he said. “Our behavior can be better understood using evolutionary knowledge.”

When Armas and Bolyanatz began teaching this course, they did so together in a tag-team format and offered the course once a year. Now it is scheduled each fall and spring, with each taking a turn teaching it. During the next year, Bolyanatz will offer it in fall 2010 and Armas in spring 2011.

COD student Audrey Koestler was fascinated by the subject when she took the class with Bolyanatz, with Armas as a guest lecturer. She understands why it falls under both psychology and anthropology.

“Coming from an anthropological background, I was very interested to see the intersection of cross-cultural research on such things as ‘Theory of the Mind’ and other psychological concepts,” she said. “It’s a credit to the College that such a course is offered. There are some four-year universities that don’t even have an Anthropology department, so I was proud to have the opportunity to take this course at COD.”

Armas said Evolutionary Psychology is a relatively new approach that has significant future implications in the interdisciplinary field of behavioral sciences.

“If you want to keep up with what is the near future in science, this is one of those courses,” he said. “It’s not a luxury. It’s a need if the College wants to stay current in providing opportunities for excellence in education.”

Evolutionary psychology, Anthropology 1820, will be offered at 1 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in fall 2010. For more information, call (630) 942-2010.

## Introducing Economic Anthropology and Exchange: Student-Centered Lessons that Work

Cynthia Ninivaggi

Until recently my introductory-level cultural anthropology students might have agreed with Thomas Carlyle that economic anthropology is a "dismal science" indeed. Despite bestselling works on "behavioral economics" by Malcolm Gladwell and Stephen Leavitt, economic anthropology was seldom cited as students' favorite part of the course on end-of-term evaluations. Students do seem highly engaged in cross-cultural comparisons of practices related to the humanities, such as religion and art, as well as cross-cultural perspectives on marriage, gender, and psychology. But I continued to puzzle over their polite indifference to kula rings and Big Men feasts.

A dismal science to students perhaps, but crucial to their professor. Economic anthropology, exchange, subsistence and debates between formalists and substantivists are fundamental concepts for even the most rudimentary understandings of culture and social structure. Here I share techniques and activities I have developed to teach economic anthropology and exchange in more student-centered ways. These activities quickly build a learning community and permit ongoing formative assessment by encouraging the application of new vocabulary and concepts.

Common learning goals for economic anthropology include recognizing exchange's universality in the human experience and distinguishing between three types of exchange: reciprocity, redistribution and market exchange. Different patterns of exchange predominate according to subsistence mode. Later on in the course, students' ability to recognize this relationship between subsistence and other social characteristics, such as political organization, is easily assessed in a few multiple-choice questions. With this connection made, there is time and energy left over to move forward to more compelling case studies and current events examples to apply what we are learning.

Traditionally, Haviland (2011), Ember and Ember (2011), Nanda (2011) and most other respected textbook authors place economic anthropology towards the middle of the course, after theory, methods, language and subsistence but before marriage, politics

and religion. By contrast, Barbara Miller's *Cultural Anthropology in a Globalizing World* (2010) breaks from this pattern, placing economic anthropology directly after research methods. Using this text, the last one I used before deciding to forego traditional texts altogether, I was impressed by Miller's ambitious goals for student learning on theory. Why not put exchange and economics up front and center?

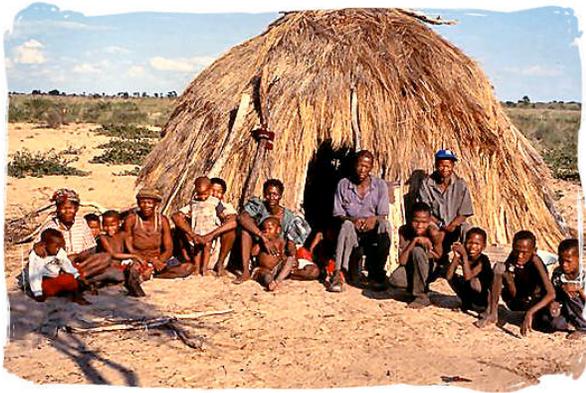
**Individual professors have enormous power to shape the learning "culture" to increase student success and self-confidence.**

One very good reason to resist this impulse was, again, because my students didn't particularly like it. Many generations of students had exited my class not particularly turned on by Mayan cargo systems and potlatches.

And I too had other important goals for the course and for myself as well. I wanted to raise standards, but our student population seems to grow less academically prepared each year. I remain skeptical that the cookie-cutter accommodations offered to learning-disabled students truly level the academic playing field for everyone. I was increasingly determined to notice floundering students early enough to make a difference. In addition, I wanted to use discussion to more effectively model academic debate, to fight back against what I perceived at my own institution as a tendency for students to stay quiet, give the "right" answers and let the professor do all the talking. I wanted to create a class where it would be a little safer to think out loud, make a mistake and not shut down.

But what to do? For me, economic anthropology early in the schedule would mean that the least student-friendly part of my course would occur when I wanted as near universal participation as possible. I needed early and consistent formative assessment—ways to check for understanding before the formal exam. I needed fun, debate, passion and excitement in the very place where it was usually most lacking.

Good texts solve problems. Richard's Lee's "Eating Christmas in the Kalahari," originally published in *Natural History* in 1969 and appearing regularly in anthologies designed for students (e.g. Angeloni 2009), illustrates vividly and quickly so many first-day-of-anthropology ideas: cultural relativism and ethnocentrism, fieldwork, rapport with informants. Lee's article can also serve more complex



A San community in Botswana  
copyright © South African tourism

learning goals as well. Students can begin to recognize early on the relationship between subsistence, rules of exchange and everyday behavior.

In contrast to Lee's description of hunter-gatherers insulting his gift of meat, sociologist and ethnographer Matthew Hamabata engagingly navigates the politic formality of Japan's elite corporate wives in his *Crested Kimono: Power and Love in the Japanese Business Family* (1990). My American students enjoyed learning the Japanese concepts of *on*, *giri* and *ninjo* gifts, words that expressed so well their own intense and mixed emotions about gift-giving in their own lives.

After the successful introduction of the Lee and Hamabata texts, I began to develop the set of exercises I currently use for economic anthropology, exercises that must do double duty for teaching the topic and getting students oriented to the discipline of anthropology at the same time.

For their very first short homework assignment, I ask students to identify Marcel Mauss and his significance for anthropology in 150-200 words. Such a painlessly completed and graded first-day assignment offers a lovely gift exchange opportunity, pun intended. You, the professor, receive a natural opportunity to point out the academic honesty policy so dutifully noted on your syllabus. You also get to mention your citation preferences and policies, and to air your true feelings about Wikipedia. In exchange, your students receive a reassuring first taste of success in your course.

### Analyzing Gift Exchange

Outside the classroom, the students discover Mauss' "The Gift," but inside it (or in a discussion forum if online), we are free to begin to make some comparisons. "What gift exchange practices exist in

the U.S.?" I asked when creating this lesson for the first time. I was quite unprepared for the depth and passion of the discussions that ensued, particularly in the online environment, as I posed, refined and posed again what came to be my Christmas-and-baby-shower gift question. What values are revealed? What rules or elements of reciprocity, redistribution and market exchange could students observe in their own lives? As it turned out, plenty.

My students' rich, if sometimes strangely convoluted descriptions of Christmas practices, their exacting arguments over variations in practice or non-practice, their expressions of alarm over its decline into mindless consumerism make for endless debate. In fact, putting exchange front and center in the course has led me to omit the stilted first-day "icebreaker" of what's-your-name-and-major I staged for so many years, in hopes of getting students comfortable enough to discuss and debate. Now I can be sure that by the third or fourth class, few students can resist getting drawn in.

Baby and wedding shower descriptions elicit lively conversations as well. Rather than feeling left out of the dialogue, students from outside the U.S. become intrigued by an aspect of American life they may not have experienced. Often they offer comparative descriptions of gifting rituals for newborns and their mothers in their own culture. Such a spontaneous dialogue is welcome when it occurs; "foreign" students struggling with various aspects of U.S. college life are thrust into the unexpected and gratifying role of academic expert. An environment of mutual respect and curiosity about cultural difference emerges naturally from the beginning.

Religion and myth is the last topic in my course, and in the interests of reinforcing the lesson of culture as holistic, students can be reminded of the Christmas gift exchange many weeks later in a different context, if needed. In the beginning, it is worth taking time to work closely with students to first describe—then ever-so tentatively interpret—the behaviors they observe around them. As Dorothy Davis (2009) has noted in her inspiring account of "Teaching the Nacirema about the Nacirema," having inexperienced students interview others can yield mixed results. Certainly in my own classes, the quality of cultural analysis I elicit from a roomful of first year students the first week is poor. Yet simply practicing this kind of thinking together can be a wonderful early introduction to anthropology.

A few refinements in the exchange lesson have helped me overcome students' difficulty in describing, let alone interpreting and analyzing, the values that underlie behaviors in their own culture. The exercise

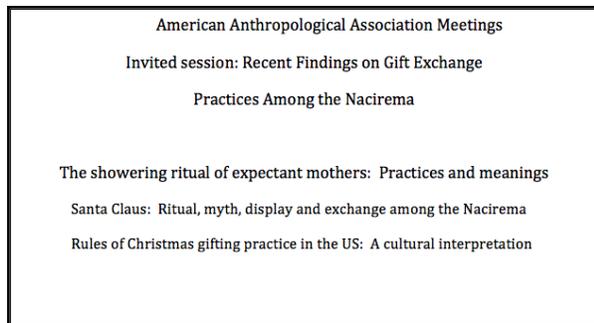


Figure 1

I'm about to describe must be undertaken in a spirit of lightheartedness, because students intensely dislike making mistakes in front of others.

At the start of class, I give students a copy of Horace Miner's (1956) widely anthologized "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema." After about ten minutes I interrupt their reading and ask what the author's goal is.

It usually takes about another five or ten minutes of questioning—"Where do the Nacirema live? Do you know any?"—for students to realize that Nacirema is America spelled backward and that Miner and I have fooled them into exoticizing themselves. I offer them an opportunity to extend the parody. The mood may be light, but in truth I am taking an opportunity to demystify the academy a bit by introducing them to the new terrain of academic conferences and scientific discourse. I present the class with a "program" from the American Anthropological Association meetings, (Figure 1).

Often I ask students to form a panel of about three members per "paper". The third "paper" is by far the most challenging to improvise, and sometimes I omit it. I have found it helpful to ask students what Mauss would say about the function of Christmas gift exchange, and to prompt students to practice using the terms reciprocity, redistribution and market exchange in their analysis. Students inevitably confuse redistribution with regifting; we clear that up. I have found that when confronted by the "theory and methods" lecture the following week, students who have already practiced analyzing the Nacirema at this fairly sophisticated level are much more engaged and attentive, and much more apt to pose pertinent questions about the ideas of anthropology's founding fathers and mothers.

### Cross-cultural Variations in "Fairness" and Exchange: the Ultimatum game

The purported universality of notions of economic "fairness" is believed by some to be demonstrated by experiments in playing a simple game of exchange called the "Ultimatum game." First described by Guth et al (1982), researchers across the social science disciplines have since developed various versions of the Ultimatum game and analyzed what surely must be thousands of games. "Homo economicus," that idealized and purely rational and self-interested individual of classic economics, now seems to have been rendered extinct by behavioral economics. These experiments in the Ultimatum Game have added much to our understanding of how cultural difference and a host of other factors influence economic decision-making (Panotti and Hadley 2003, Tracer 2003, Wiessner 2009).

Elementary school students can now be viewed on YouTube<sup>1</sup> playing ultimatum and lisping the learning outcome of universal "fairness." I too needed an exciting way to demonstrate the universality of exchange, and to invite my students to critically evaluate this concept. I may not be ready to post my own class's ultimatum experiment online just yet.

The simplest form of the ultimatum game is played with two players sitting across from one another. One player is presented with a sum of money (\$20.00 perhaps). This first player is instructed to divide the wealth, giving the second player as much of the cash as she desires, ranging from nothing to all of the money. If the other player accepts the offer, each keeps his or her share. If the second rejects the offer, however, neither player keeps the money.

So one morning after emptying the household coin jar, I managed to arrive in a brand new class prepared with several sets of nickels, dimes and quarters for a very low-budget round of the Ultimatum game. In my most carefully neutral researcher voice, I explained the rules to the attentive class. I assured them that in fact they could keep the money and take it home with them. I assumed that after a profit-maximizing round or two I could launch into my usual lecture on anthropology's substantivist doubts about the universality of Homo economicus' profit-driven behavior. We began to play.

Unfortunately, my first pair of students had missed Western Civilization's memo on what it means to live in a profit-motivated culture. Player one slid half her coins to her partner, an offer amiably accepted. They took my stash of nickels and sat down. "50%" I wrote on the board.

<sup>1</sup> accessed at <http://mindyourdecisions.com/blog/2009/11/03/the-ultimatum-game-played-by-children>.

I called up my second pair, upping the ante to dimes. This time Player One slid six coins across to her partner. We played a third round with the same results. My students seemed intent on giving their free money away. My neutral experimental researcher visage must have begun to crack at that point, because from the back row Tiffany<sup>2</sup> piped up helpfully. "Nobody in here is going to keep the money," she said.

I could have seized the teachable moment. I might have congratulated Tiffany for intuiting the *relative or marginal utility* of earning fifty cents off a fellow first-year student when the good opinion of one's classmates was at stake. I realized too late it was the lesson I meant to teach. Instead I was frustrated that my lesson had not quite followed the script I'd expected. I felt a perverse impulse to make it even worse—student-centered learning be hanged! I would call up the pair of twins in the front row.

They took their seats at the table up front and as if on cue, Darlene<sup>3</sup> unhesitatingly pushed 100% of her coins to her sister Danielle. Abandoning my last pretense of disinterested observer, I threw up my hands and the class broke up into laughter. In that moment, disparate individuals came together as a learning community. For the rest of the semester, they spoke up, they participated and they helped one another succeed.

### Lessons that multitask

Traditional lectures and examinations still form the foundation of my course online and take place in the traditional brick and mortar classroom. However, the development of a short list of interactive games or activities for cultural anthropology does more than simply engage and motivate students. A contemporary college classroom represents a wide range of needs and

YOUR LEARNING GOAL:				
Define fieldwork	Lee			
Describe significance of Rapport with informants	Lee			
Define Ethnography	Lee			
Define Foraging	Lee			
Distinguish reciprocity, redistribution, market exchange	Lee	Hamabata		Christmas and baby shower discussion
Recognize Universality/function of gift exchange	Lee	Hamabata	Who's Mauss? Homework	
Distinguish Ethnocentrism vs. cultural relativism in fieldwork	Lee	Hamabata		
Observe and describe rituals and practices "anthropologically"				Christmas and baby shower discussion
Interpret the values revealed by rituals and practices	Lee	Hamabata		Christmas and baby shower discussion
Give example of exercise of individual human agency within culture	Lee	Hamabata		Christmas and baby shower discussion
Recognize Relationship between subsistence and exchange	Lee	Hamabata	Mauss	
Profit-driven exchange: Distinguish Formalist vs. substantivism				Ultimatum game
Discuss relationship between myth and everyday behavior myth or shapes behaviors				Christmas and baby shower discussion
Participate in faux anthropology session				Christmas and baby shower discussion
Distinguish Manifest vs latent functions of myths and practice	Lee		Mauss	Christmas and baby shower discussion
Define liminal state and describe its relationship to gift exchange				Baby shower, Wedding shower, graduation, etc.

Figure 2

<sup>2</sup> name changed

<sup>3</sup> names changed

abilities. A more modern and inclusive pedagogy demands an acknowledgement of multiple intelligences and ways of learning; it even demands a reasonable degree of differential instruction. Individual professors have enormous power to shape the learning "culture" to increase student success and self-confidence.

The list of learning goals in the chart (Figure 2) may seem long. However, cultural anthropology professors might easily list many dozens more they would hope to include in a course. Both texts and activities must multitask successfully in order to complete the array of topics cultural anthropology courses require. Introductory concepts and economic anthropology concepts are taught almost simultaneously in the lessons I describe. Student-centered activities can promote positive and respectful attitudes in class and aid in the building of a true learning community. Those same activities consistently provide me with invaluable feedback on what parts of my course content need a moment of review or reinforcement. With this frequent feedback, I can feel confident that it is time to move ahead to the next lesson. *7A*

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#### More insults sans four-letter words

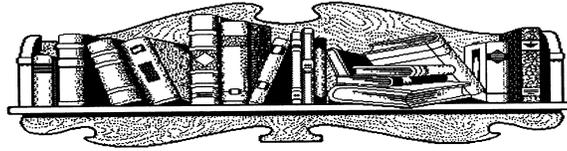
"He uses statistics as a drunken man uses lamp-posts... For support rather than illumination."

-

Andrew Lang (1844-1912)

"I am returning this otherwise good typing paper to you because someone has printed gibberish all over it and put your name at the top."

- English Professor, Ohio University



## Book Review

*The Gift of a Bride: A Tale of Anthropology, Matrimony and Murder* by Serena Nanda and Joan Gregg (2009: AltiMira Press)

Reviewed by Barry Kass

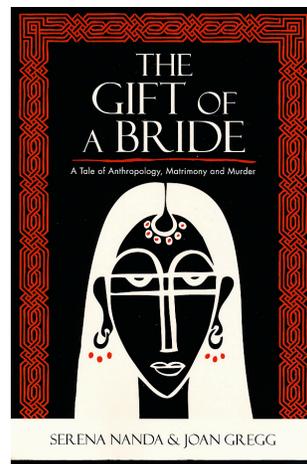
Serena Nanda, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, C.U.N.Y., along with her co-author, Joan Gregg, Professor Emeritus, English, College of Technology, C.U.N.Y., have written a terrific murder mystery as well as a most engaging anthropological view of the culture of Indian immigrants in the U.S. As pressures of cultural assimilation in their new country clash with traditional values and customs of their native land, the issues these immigrants face, especially the women, provide the focus of this book. Serena Nanda is well known in contemporary anthropology as the author of a landmark study in cross-cultural gender identities, *Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India* (1999: Wadsworth Press). This is an ethnography that vividly describes the transgender cult of the Hijras, which includes a complete emasculation ritual. Nanda has also authored *Gender Diversity: Crosscultural Variations* (2000: Waveland Press) and a widely used textbook, *Culture Counts* (co-author Richard Warms, 2009: Wadsworth Press). Co-author Joan Gregg has taught English in China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Pakistan. In *The Gift of a Bride* they bring both a depth of knowledge about south Asian cultures as well as a deep empathy for the characters involved.

The story revolves around Anjeli, a young Hindu bride, whose arranged marriage brings her to New York City where her husband is trying to establish a career in business. Nanda and Gregg skillfully weave together various characters, including an anthropologist, a college professor, various members of the Indian immigrant community, including an Indian detective in the NYC police force, a sexual deviant and rapist and a murderer. All of these

characters appear against the backdrop of Anjeli's great difficulties of being a 'good' Indian wife in the pressure-cooker of the conflicting cultures: traditional India and the modern U.S. Readers of this novel are also treated to an 'ethnographic' excursion to India itself, where, through the eyes of the anthropologist, we are shown scenes of daily customs and rituals, essential to furthering the plot once the story returns to Anjeli's married life in New York City.

A central theme enmeshed throughout the book is a focus on gender, especially the sharply drawn distinctions between the accepted dominant roles of men and subordinate roles of women in Indian society, and how this is impacted by life in the 'new' world of New York City. Without giving away too much of the story, Anjeli's mother-and father-in-law are very repugnant figures, but given the anthropological knowledge gained by the readers, their thoughts and actions are rendered quite understandable in the context of their cultural framework. This book is exceptionally well written, both from a literary as well as a social science perspective. I found myself drawn into the story so deeply that I felt a real pang of empathy for the murder victim, as well as a more 'anthropological' understanding of the social and cultural conditions that led to the awful event.

Over the past 40 years of my teaching anthropology at S.U.N.Y. Orange, I have examined many texts and supplements for use in my courses. A major consideration has always been the ability of the author to engage students' interest and to provide them with a profound learning experience in anthropology in a writing style that would keep them turning the pages. Nanda and Gregg's *The Gift of a Bride* meets these expectations and more. This is an excellent book to assign as a supplement for courses in Cultural Anthropology, Gender Studies, Immigrant Studies, and Southeast Asia. Not only will students obtain excellent educational value from reading this book, but you, the professor, will enjoy reading it as well! *7A*



## Notes on Contributors

**Barry D. Kass** is Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, S. U. N. Y. Orange, Middletown, NY. He is a past president of SACC and has been a member of the AAA Executive Board. Barry is also an anthropological photographer and site developer of [imagesofanthropology.com](http://imagesofanthropology.com).

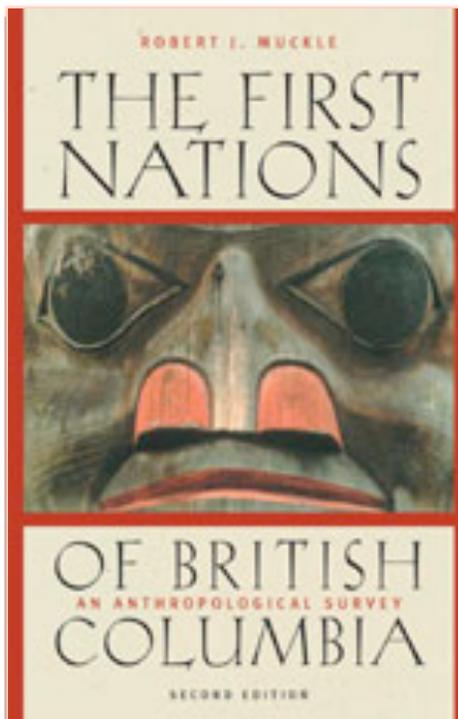
**Jack Kelso** is professor emeritus of anthropology at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He served as department chair and director of the University Honors Program and has received several distinguished awards for teaching and research in biocultural anthropology.

**Frank Lagana** is Professor of Anthropology, Department of Social Sciences, Queensborough Community College, Bayside, NY. Besides Introduction to Anthropology, he teaches courses on Native Americans and the Caribbean and has

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**Bob Muckle** is a registered professional archaeologist and anthropology professor at Capilano University in North Vancouver, British Columbia. His teaching duties include a summer archaeology field school. Bob contributes frequently to *SACC Notes* and his column, "Archaeology Matters," is a regular feature. He is also a past president of SACC.

**Cynthia Ninivaggi** is Chair of the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice at Georgian Court University, Lakewood, NJ. She teaches courses in sociology, anthropology and women's studies, and her research interests include race relations and multicultural education, among other topics.



**Robert J. Muckle**

***The First Nations of British Columbia: An Anthropological Survey***, Second Edition. UBC Press, 2007

*The First Nations of British Columbia*, second edition, is a concise and accessible overview of First Nations peoples, cultures, and issues in the province. Robert J. Muckle familiarizes readers with the history, diversity, and complexity of First Nations to provide a context for contemporary concerns and initiatives.