

# Department of Anthropology

## Select Course Descriptions – Fall 2015

### **ANTH 490-079: Historical Archaeology**

**Professor A. Agbe-Davies**

Archaeologists interested in the development of the “modern world” (ca. 1492 to the present) define their work as historical archaeology. This seminar provides an overview of scholarship in the field through a focus on distinct classes of artifacts that have been the basis for major developments in the field. Participants will learn about modern material culture through readings and lecture, but most importantly, opportunities for hands-on-analysis.

### **ANTH 490-004: Anthropological Perspectives on the Energy Crisis**

**Professor Robert Daniels**

This course will ask:

- Is there really an energy crisis? A climate crisis?
- What is the validity of predictions of industrial collapse, a population “die off”, or even “near-term extinction”?
- Do oil reserves and other resources really explain current geopolitical conflicts?
- Is a comparative study of past civilizations relevant to the future of our species?
- In short, if anthropology is the examination of humans from a comparative, multidisciplinary, cultural-ecological approach over an evolutionary time scale, of what use is anthropology in understanding these issues?

Grades based on attendance, critical reading and discussion, position papers, class presentations, and a term project.

### **ANTH 490-064: Value, Production and Exchange in East Asia**

**Professor Christopher T. Nelson**

What do we mean by value? Is it our morals or our ethics? Are we talking about our priorities in life, our sense of what is important and what isn't? Do we mean our worth as human beings, our professional qualifications, or our ability to do a job? Could we be thinking of our skill in comparing one thing to another? Are we discussing the price of a watch, a new pair of shoes, dinner at our favorite restaurant? Is value something we create, or is it an essential quality of things? Is it quantitative or qualitative? Could it be that value is nothing more than a term in a course on Macroeconomics or a seminar in Linguistics?

Investigation of the category of value has been one of the foundational projects of Anthropology. This semester, we will consider the importance of this complex question for life in the modern

world, and we will think about the insights that anthropology has been able to produce. While the focus of the class will be East Asia, we will also be attentive to the work that anthropologists have done in other places.

**ANTH 490-078: Human Biology in Comparative Perspective**  
**Professor Amanda Thompson**

This class will explore the biological and biocultural factors that shape human biology and health from the cellular to the societal levels. This course will compare human biology, health and development across a range of international settings and students will have the opportunity to collect and analyze biological and biocultural data.

**ANTH 540 – Planetary Crises: Ecological and Cultural Transitions**  
**Professor Sandy Smith-Nonini**

We will use a seminar-style format to analyze and discuss key social-environmental crises facing human cultures in coming decades – especially climate change, energy/resource limits and environmental degradation—and their relation with capitalism. We will look at scientific, social and anthropological perspectives on these crises, and their reception by different publics. We will also devote substantial time to examining approaches to more sustainable and equitable models for social life, especially models that challenge dominant capitalist understandings. There will be a built-in participatory and collective research component, and opportunities to interact with non-profits and activists working on these issues. Students will draw on case studies to construct their own scenarios for transitions to more sustainable futures. Upper-level undergraduates and graduate students especially welcome.

**ANTH 590: Anthropology of Diet and Health**  
**Professor Steve Corbett**

An examination of human nutrition focusing on the biological, evolutionary, and cultural aspects of human dietary adaptations. The concepts to be covered include the evolution of human diet, the biology of nutrition, prehistoric and historic nutrition transitions, sociocultural aspects of dietary intake, and subsequent health impacts from variation and changes in dietary intake.

**ANTH 897-037: Environment and Population: The Ecology of Risk, Uncertainty, and Demographic Behavior**  
**Professor Paul Leslie**

Concern over the relationship between population and environment abounds. Much research focuses on human impact on the environment. What of the other side of the relationship? How do environmental characteristics (especially the physical and biotic environments, but also the social/economic/political environment as it interacts with the above) affect population characteristics and dynamics? And how do responses to those environmental characteristics - mitigation or coping - in turn affect the environment? Thus, we will whenever possible take a systems view. A special emphasis will be on the biological and behavioral consequences of environmental fluctuations and unpredictability.

**ANTH 897-059: Identity**  
**Professor Silvia Tomaskova**

Race, ethnicity, gender, age, class, religion are some of the categories that people have used in recent times to define and describe themselves. The seminar will examine theoretical discussions of “identity construction” and explore archaeological cases that have attempted to address the question. We will discuss the historical nature of an individual, a family, a community, a group and the culturally varied nature of these concepts. Our effort will be to explore the theoretical terrain of these discussions and a methodological possibility for archaeologists to join the debate. Case studies will include as many regions of the world as we will be able to find, and the same effort will be made to cross time zones. Prehistoric and historical research that has grappled with identities will be included.