

Exploring Culture through Film (Anthropology 263)

Spring I 2023

Instructor	Sandy Wenger, sandywen@usc.edu
Time	Monday Wednesday, 8:30-9:50am, GFS-106
Office Hours	Mondays 11am-12:30pm, KAP-348, or by appointment
Course Website	https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/5953290
Teaching Assistant	EI Whittingham, lwhittin@usc.edu

Course Description

This course explores key anthropological concepts through an analysis of visual and written representations of societies throughout the world and across time. We will examine issues such as colonialism, the body, gender, race, language, religion, and inequality, and apply these concepts through critical discussion of written ethnography, and especially film. As an introduction to cultural anthropology, this course will highlight visual media (e.g., film, video, photography) as a research method anthropologists use to study expressive cultures, as well as a medium for the analysis and representation of culture(s). We will examine contemporary, cross-cultural visual worlds, and the conditions under which these are produced, consumed, distributed, and represented across globalized and colonized cultural landscapes. In doing so, this course will highlight visual representations by a range of scholars and filmmakers, not all of whom are anthropologists, but whose work is central for understanding how cultures around the world have been made visible to us.

Some key questions we will consider include:

What does it mean to be an anthropologist?

How do anthropologists and filmmakers represent culture differently?

What kinds of methods do anthropologists use to observe and represent culture(s)?

What are the political implications of writing and/or visually portraying our own or other cultures?

Course Goals

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- ✚ Understand important concepts in the discipline of anthropology through their visual representations.
- ✚ Apply anthropological concepts and the practice of cultural relativity in understanding the diversity of human lives.
- ✚ Examine real world issues related to race, gender, socio-economic class, and colonial histories to understand the inequalities of the present.

- ✦ Understand written ethnography and films as representations made from a particular point of view and learn how to see and assess these critically.
- ✦ Demonstrate ability to successfully analyze and negotiate across cultural differences.
- ✦ Sharpen your critical listening, seeing, reading, and writing skills as this course places particular emphasis on developing students' ability to articulate, synthesize, and evaluate key arguments in course readings, lectures, and discussions.

Required Course Material

All required readings and media for this class will be available in PDF format on the Canvas course website.

Important Note: This course addresses explicit material and concepts, including race, sexuality, bodies, gender, violence, religion etc. You are asked to engage with these topics critically, respectfully, and professionally. *You might not agree with all of the viewpoints presented. However, you cannot refuse to read or view any of the materials because you think they will clash with your own beliefs.* One of the purposes of higher education is to expose you to ideas, beliefs, and practices you may not share or condone so that you can better develop your own position regarding them one way or another. You can still disagree with them, but by exposing yourself to a variety of information you will be in a better position to do so intelligently. Furthermore, hateful language (such as homophobia, transphobia, sexism, or racism), personal attacks, and belittling others with whom you disagree will not be tolerated. *Media selections screened in this course could contain nudity, simulated sex, violence, and words categorized as profane.* This media content permeates our world, and we are viewing it from intellectual, critical, and analytical perspectives.

Critical Reading

The course is made up of a lecture and a discussion section, and you are encouraged to be intellectually adventurous, to think about whether a given paradigm might prove helpful to you even if it seems strange or unfamiliar. In all assignments, creativity and a sense of humor are rewarded, as well as demonstrating mastery of the material.

A careful and critical reading of the assigned texts before class is crucial. I recommend that you underline important arguments, mark passages that confuse you, and look up difficult terms.

1. Try to get the big picture. What is the phenomenon being explained? What is the explanation offered? How does this apply to a specific observable phenomenon in social relations, in other words, what examples can you generate to illustrate the explanation offered? With whom (or what alternative point of view) might the author be arguing? Or how does this explanation differ from other explanations for the same phenomenon?

2. Close textual reading: Find some portions of the text you want us to discuss for close reading and interpretation. Find portions that are difficult or unclear to you. Find portions that you think exemplify the author's most important insights. How is the text argued? How does it reach its conclusions? What kind of evidence is presented? What kind of audience does it seem to be written for? Who is it in dialogue with? Are there any inconsistencies in the argument?

Course Assignments and Course Grading

Assignments throughout this course are scaffolded, meaning that each assignment is meant to both help you learn the substantive material and help you build your skills. It also means that assignments build on each other, so it is important to complete each one, in the order assigned.

Attendance and Participation | 10%

Perusall Annotations | 35%

Media Journal | 25%

Final Group Project | 30%

Your final letter grades will be determined according to this standard scale:

A	94-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	F	< 59
A-	90-93	B	84-86	C	74-76	D	64-66		
		B-	80-83	C-	70-73	D-	60-63		

Attendance and Participation | 10% of total grade

Discussion sections accompanying the lecture very much rely on conversation in which you are active participants. You are expected to speak up and engage in every discussion section. You are expected to read and reflect on assigned texts as well as films beforehand and come to class ready to discuss them. Please bring your assigned readings to class, because your TA will refer to them to read quotes and complete small-group activities. Your participation grade in this class is based on attendance, meaningful participation in discussions and other activities, and respectful collaboration with your peers in lectures and discussion sections.

Perusall Annotations | 35% of total grade

You will be required to **submit annotations** on the assigned readings on Perusall every week. All 40 required readings for this semester are posted on Perusall. You will need to read and **make 3 thoughtful annotations for each individual reading** within the

Perusall application to receive points. **Every single annotation should consist of about 4-5 sentences that are spread out through the text.** Thoughtful annotations may engage in key points in the readings, stimulate discussion with others, offer informative questions or comments, and/or help others by addressing their questions or confusions. Each thoughtful annotation is worth 3 points, for up to total of 9 possible points per each assigned reading.

Perusall Access:

You will need to create a free Perusall account, if you do not already have one:

1. Go to www.perusall.com, or <https://app.perusall.com/> and click Log In.
2. Create an account using your USC email address and an original password of your choice.
3. your choice.
4. Select "I am a student" and enter the course code: **WENGER-P6XA6**
Please be sure you create your Perusall account as soon as possible so that you can start accessing our course readings.
5. When you sign up for a Perusall account, you will be prompted to enter your "student ID." It is important that you enter your USC Numerical ID in this Field. If you have already set up your Perusall account for another class, please make sure that the Student ID field contains your USC Numerical ID by clicking "edit profile" from the drop-down menu in the upper-right corner.

Perusall Annotations are due no later than Monday at 11:59 PM each week.

Media Journal—Autoethnography | 25% of total grade

Autoethnography is "research, writing, story and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political" (Ellis, 2004, p. xix). Autoethnography is powerful because you will connect your personal experiences; in this case your own media practices, with 'public issues' or structural constraints that are social, cultural and political. To do this assignment well, you will need to be reflexive while referencing course readings and films, and consider the many facets of film and media that you may never have considered before.

This assignment requires that you **keep a media journal for 5 days**. The data you collect over this time period will be the basis for your autoethnographic analysis. **The completed Media Journal will include 5 reflections of at least 500 words each, 5 images, and your fieldnotes.**

Data Collection:

- 1) For 5 days, take a photo every day that allows you to reflect on the following question: *In what ways do visual media show up in my everyday life and how do they shape my lived experiences?* The photos/screenshots can depict anything visual you engage with on a particular day, such as an ad that you saw on your way to school, a show or movie you watched with your friends, a photo

that popped up on one of your social media feeds, an image you were sent by someone.

- 2) Write down notes about that image and the context in which you engaged with it. Be sure to include places, dates, times, immediate emotions, people who were with you and their responses if any.

The Analysis & Write-Up:

- 1) For each day, reflect on the photo you have taken and think about what it means to you, and give details of the context in which the photo was taken. *When was it taken? Where was it taken? What does it depict—in general and for you? Why did you decide to take this photo?* In short, provide a brief description of why this image is meaningful to you and what it reveals about your experiences on that particular day. Please do keep in mind the overarching question (In what ways do visual media show up in my everyday life and how do they shape my lived experiences?) when you take your photo and write up your reflection.

Questions to consider:

- ✚ Did you seek out the different media your photos portrait or did they just happen to be there as you went about your day?
 - ✚ What associations do you have to the different media you engaged with on those days?
 - ✚ What kinds of feelings did the different media evoke in you? Why do you think that is?
 - ✚ What do the media tell you? Are they teaching you something about gender/sex, race, class, age, ethnicity, ability, or ideology?
 - ✚ In what ways do these different media express your identity? Are there certain media that seem to represent your beliefs and values, and other that don't? How do they do that, and what do they mean to you?
- 2) Make substantive references to at least one reading for the course in each reflection. Inserting a quote from the author is not a substantive reference. I expect you to show an understanding of the main thesis of the article or chapter and use that to make your argument.

The Media Journal is due on Wednesday, March 8, at 11:59 PM

Final Group Project | Film Proposal | 30% of total grade

At the beginning of the semester, you will be asked to sign up **as part of a five-person group to work on a proposal to “produce” a film based on a real-life event OR literary property (novel, story, play, poem) that has NOT yet been produced for the screen.** The film can either be a documentary or a narrative.

Your completed project must include the following elements:

- ✚ A written short synopsis of the proposed film project. The synopsis is a succinct overview of what your story is about, why the story is significant, why you choose to do a documentary OR narrative, and how you're going to tell it. The synopsis should be roughly 1000 words.
- ✚ A visual element to promote this project. This could include a poster, a website, a promotional video, etc. The length of a video may not exceed 3 minutes.
- ✚ A reflective essay that engages with the following three questions:
 - 1) What is one major theme you want to address in your film and how does this relate to anthropology AND the course? Your answer should be roughly 500 words.
 - 2) How do you intend to apply this anthropological theme and relevant literature within your film? Explain, using specific examples from your film and chosen topic. Your answer should be roughly 500 words.
 - 3) If you had never taken this course and you would investigate the same topic, how might your final film be different? Explain using specific examples from your film and chosen topic. Think: ethics, ethnocentrism, point of view, cultural relativism, etc. Your answer should be roughly 500 words.

Your group project will be graded on:

- ✚ The completeness and originality of your synopsis, visual project, and reflective paper
- ✚ Ability to include anthropological language and insights into analysis of filmic representations of culture
- ✚ Your ability to work as a team—there will be a self-assessment of each group member regarding their input

The Final Group Project will be due on Wednesday, May 3 at 11:59PM

Learning Policies

Classroom Environment: The topics in this class can sometimes be difficult topics – we talk about race, gender, class, our place in society, and the painful histories and ideas that anthropology has held. What makes this class work, and what makes it a place to learn together, is respect and empathy. In this class, all people, with all opinions and beliefs, are welcome. Doing anthropology today means both celebrating our diversity, but also recognizing that our different pathways are what contribute most to new ideas. Speak openly, show respect, share, be bold and be yourself. Additionally, if you're concerned about any of the course materials—or if any other concerns arise—please feel free to talk to me, either via email or during office hours.

Name and Pronouns: I will gladly honor your request to address you by your chosen name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this at any point in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Communication Policy: To speak to me, please come to **my office hours on Mondays between 11am-12:30pm or make an appointment**. Outside of office hours, email (sandywen@usc.edu) is the best way to reach me. During the week (Monday-Friday), I will respond to messages within 24-36 hours. To allow me to identify your message and respond in a timely manner, please include your full name and student number in your message.

Policy on Grade Change Requests: If you believe there is a mathematical error in the calculation of your grade, please come to my office hours or send me an email. Grade changes will only be made in the event that an actual error has occurred. A student's grade will not be changed simply because a student feels that "they deserved a higher grade" or "worked very hard and should have received a better grade." Requests for a regrade should be submitted in writing. Please provide your original assignment and a detailed explanation of how you believe your work meets the requirements of the assignment/rubric. Ultimately, grades are the prerogative of the course instructor and are not negotiable.

Policy on Missing a Deadline: Students are expected to submit their Reading Discussion Posts and written assignments by the deadline provided each week. Students who miss a deadline will automatically receive a zero on any missed assignment. If you have a compelling reason for missing a deadline, you must contact your TA right away. If possible, they will grant you an extension.

Class Accessibility and Inclusion: This course is intended for all university students, including those with mental, physical, or cognitive disabilities, illness, injuries, or impairments—whether they be apparent or not apparent. As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if at any point during the quarter you find yourself not able to fully access the space, content, and experience of this course, you are welcome (and not required) to contact me by email, or during office hours to discuss your specific needs.

Additionally, the USC Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) ensures access to educational programs and resources for all students. OSAS assists students whose disabilities include, orthopedic, visual, hearing, learning, chronic health, and psychological disabilities. By making a plan through OSAS, you can ensure appropriate accommodations without disclosing your condition or diagnosis to your instructors. If you need an accommodation because of the impact of a disability, please contact OSAS at 213-740-0776 or <https://osas.usc.edu/> and forward your faculty notification letter to me.

Academic Integrity: USC is an institution of learning, research, and scholarship that is strengthened by the existence of an environment of integrity. As members of the

academic community, students are responsible for maintaining this environment by subscribing to the practice of academic integrity and accepting individual responsibility for your work and actions. If you are ever in doubt, cite your source. If you read something from a book/article/website that you want to include in a paper, you must cite. If a theory or writer's idea inspires your own writing, you must cite your source.

Violations of academic integrity are unacceptable and will not be tolerated, because they devalue the teaching and learning experience for the entire community. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe. Violations of academic integrity (cheating, plagiarism, etc.) will result in no credit for the assignment and possible course failure and referral for disciplinary action. If you are unfamiliar with the notion of academic integrity, please go to <https://libraries.usc.edu/tutorial/academic-dishonesty>

Student Support Resources

USC Campus Support and Intervention: For more information, please visit <https://campussupport.usc.edu/>

The Learning & Academic Resource Center (LARC): For a list of departments that offer support, please visit <https://undergrad.usc.edu/services/resources/>

Course Schedule and Assignments

TOPIC	DATE	WHAT TO READ/WATCH	WHAT IS DUE
Week 1 Introduction and Overview	January 9		
What is Anthropology?	January 11	FILM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “A Year in the Field” (by George Gmelch, Dennis Lanson), 2020, 33 min. (Kanopy) 	
Week 2 Fieldwork and Visual Methods	<i>January 16</i> January 18	→ Martin Luther King’s Birthday READ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poole & Hillyard: “What is Fieldwork?” Banks: “Visual Anthropology—Image, Objects, and Interpretation.” Pink: “Planning and Practicing ‘Visual Methods’: Appropriate Uses and Ethical Issues.” 	Reading Discussion Post—Tuesday, 11:59pm
Week 3 The Power of Images—Part I	January 23 January 25	READ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friedman: “Defining Ethnographic Film.” Kasic: “Sensory Vérité.” Sontag: “The Image World.” FILM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Born in Brothels” (by Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman), 2006, 83 min. (https://watchdocumentaries.com/born-into-brothels/) 	Reading Discussion Post—Monday, 11:59pm

<p>Week 4 The Power of Images—Part II</p>	<p>January 30 February 1</p>	<p>READ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spray: “Filming the Other.” ▪ Scherer: “Historical Photographs of North American Indians: Primary Documents, BUT view with Care.” ▪ King: “I’m not the Indian you had in Mind.” (poem) <p>FILM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “<i>I’m not the Indian you had in Mind</i>” (by Thomas King), 2007, 5 min. (https://vimeo.com/39451956) 	<p>Reading Discussion Post—Monday, 11:59pm</p>
<p>Week 5 Early Ethnographic Film— “Salvage” Ethnography</p>	<p>February 6 February 8</p>	<p>READ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rony: “Taxidermy and Romantic Ethnography: Robert Flaherty’s Nanook of the North.” ▪ Grimshaw: “The Innocent Eye: Flaherty, Malinowski, and the Romantic Quest.” ▪ Briggs: “Family Life: Expressions of Closeness.”—Chapter 2 in <i>Never in Anger</i> (75-108) <p>FILM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Nanook of the North” (by Robert Flaherty), 1922, 69 min. (Kanopy) 	<p>Reading Discussion Post—Monday, 11:59pm</p>
<p>Week 6 Colonizing Visions and Visualizing Difference</p>	<p>February 13 February 15</p>	<p>READ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lutz & Collins: “The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes.” ▪ Turner: “The Kayapo on Television: An Anthropological Viewing.” ▪ Columpar: “The Gaze as Theoretical Touchstone: The Intersections of Film Studies, Feminist Theory, and Postcolonial Theory.” <p>FILM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “The Kayapo” (by Michael Beckham), 1987, 55 min. (Alexander Street) 	<p>Reading Discussion Post—Monday, 11:59pm</p>

<p>Week 7 Indigenous Media</p>	<p>February 20 February 22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ President’s Day <p>READ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Turner: “Representation, Politics, and Cultural Imagination in Indigenous Video.” ▪ Shepard Jr and Pace: “Authenticity and Anthropophagy in Kayapo Film Production.” <p>FILM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “The Camera is Our Weapon.” (a collection of films by Kayapo)— https://vimeo.com/gshepardjr 	<p>Reading Discussion Post—Tuesday, 11:59pm</p>
<p>Week 8 Social Race—Part I</p>	<p>February 27 March 1</p>	<p>READ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Smedley & Smedley: “Race as Biology Is Fiction, Racism as a Social Problem Is Real—Anthropological and Historical Perspectives on the Social Construction of Race.” ▪ Baldwin: “A Talk to Teachers.” ▪ Scott: “‘Some One of Us should have been there with Her’: Gender, Race, and Sexuality in <i>I am Not your Negro</i> and Contemporary Black Experimental Documentary.” <p>FILM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “I am Not Your Negro” (by Raoul Peck), 2016, 95 min. 	<p>Reading Discussion Post—Monday, 11:59pm</p>
<p>Week 9 Social Race—Part II</p>	<p>March 6 March 8</p>	<p>READ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Erigha: “On the Margins: Black Directors and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in Twenty First Century Hollywood.” ▪ Smith: “Between Colorblind and Colorconscious: Contemporary Hollywood Films and Struggles Over Racial Representation.” ▪ Molina-Guzman: “# OscarsSoWhite: how Stuart Hall explains why nothing changes in Hollywood and everything is changing.” 	<p>Reading Discussion Post—Monday, 11:59pm</p> <p>Media Journal— Wednesday, 11:59pm</p>

		<p>FILM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Gook” (by Justin Chon), 2017, 94 min. 	
Week 10	March 13 March 15	→ Spring Recess	
Week 11 Gender and Sexuality in Documentary Film	March 20 March 22	<p>READ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Salih: “On Judith Butler and Performativity.” ▪ Oishi: “Reading Realness—Paris Is Burning, Wildness, and Queer and Transgender Documentary Practice” ▪ hooks: “Is Paris Burning?” <p>FILM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Paris is Burning” (by Jennie Livingston), 1990, 77 min. (Kanopy) 	Reading Discussion Post —Monday, 11:59pm
Week 12 Gender and Sexuality in Narrative Cinema	March 27 March 29	<p>READ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hanson: “Introduction—Out Takes.” ▪ Tran: “Queer History Through a Hollywood Lens.” <p>FILM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Remember me in Red” (by Hector Ceballos), 2010, 15 min. (Kanopy) ▪ “Violets” (by Maren Jensen), 2018, 24 min. (Kanopy) ▪ “See you Soon” (by Tyler Rabinowitz), 2020, 16 min. (Vimeo) 	Reading Discussion Post —Monday, 11:59pm
Week 13 Guest Speaker: El Wittingham	April 3 April 5	<p>READ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Boellstorff: “Queer Studies in the House of Anthropology.” ▪ Gill: “Decolonizing Visual Anthropology: Locating Transnational Diasporic Queers-of-Color Voices in Ethnographic Cinema.” 	Reading Discussion Post —Monday, 11:59pm

Putting the Anthropologist in the Picture—Part I		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coppens: “Stories from the Margins: Collaborative Filmmaking and Auto-Ethnography as Tools for LGBT Activism in Indonesia.” <p>FILM</p> <p>“Fendi” (by El Wittingham), 2019, 16 min. “Pink Tiffany” (by Sophie Dia Pegrum), 2017, 39 min.</p>	
Week 14 Putting the Anthropologist in the Picture—Part II	April 10 April 12	<p>READ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ De Groof: “Rouch's Reflexive Turn: Indigenous Film as the Outcome of Reflexivity in Ethnographic Film.” ▪ Ruby: “Exposing Yourself: Reflexivity, Anthropology, and Film.” ▪ Stoller: “Conclusion—The World according to Rouch.” <p>FILM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Chronicles of a Summer” (by Jean Rouch & Edgar Morin), 1961, 911 min. 	Reading Discussion Post —Monday, 11:59pm
Week 15 Food Media	April 17 April 19	<p>READ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Belasco: “Why Study Food?” ▪ Baron, Carson, and Bernard: “Introduction—The Cultural and Material Politics of Food Representations in Film.” ▪ Matwick: “Singapore's Rising Hawkers: Food, Heritage, Imagination, and Entrepreneurship.” <p>FILM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Comfort Food” (by Sam Saffold), 2017, 9 min. ▪ “Street Food Asia—Singapore” (by David Gelb and Brian McGinn), 2019, 32 min. 	Reading Discussion Post —Monday, 11:59pm

<p>Week 16 Food Porn and “Bad” Food</p>	<p>April 24 April 26</p>	<p>READ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ McBride: “Food Porn.” ▪ DeJmanee: “‘Food Porn’ as Postfeminist Play: Digital Femininity and the Female Body on Food Blogs.” ▪ Dumitrescu: “The Curious Appeal of ‘Bad’ Food.” <p>FILM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Ugly Delicious—Tacos” (by Eddie Schmidt, Jason Zeldes, Laura Gabbert, and Morgan Neville), 2018, 54 min. 	<p>Reading Discussion Post—Monday, 11:59pm</p>
<p>Week 17</p>	<p>May 1 May 3</p>	<p>Exams</p>	<p>Final Group Project— Wednesday, 11:59pm</p>