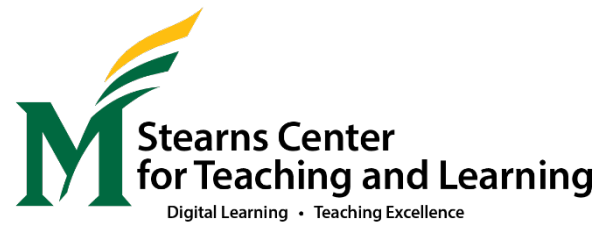


Experimenting with Assignments: Memes

Cortney Hughes Rinker, Sociology and Anthropology



I am a visual learner. I do best when I see something and write it down myself. Students come to a course with many different learning styles: visual, auditory, tactile. Some have a preference for reading and writing. Some prefer to listen. I recognize that when I first started teaching, I taught based on my own learning style, but there are limits to this, as I was making it very difficult for some students to digest the material being presented. I aim to be attentive to the multiple abilities in the classroom and to create an inclusive space by providing multiple opportunities for engagement and to demonstrate learning and understanding. The course, depending on the topic and level, also lends itself to the types of assignments that would be most successful and give students the chance to apply their skills and knowledge gained through the term. Bringing all of this together has prompted me to create a variety of assignments for my courses, and I try to make necessary adjustments and revisions to them on a regular basis based on feedback and outcomes.

I have two children. They are six and nine years old. My daughter, the older of the two, can create beautiful Google Slides as well as graphs and images for PowerPoint better than I can. My son is able to navigate different applications on the computer with ease and no assistance from me. I recognize that the world we live in encourages us to engage regularly with technology and media regardless of our age—this became more salient during the COVID-19 pandemic with virtual learning and the need to use technology to communicate since face-to-face interactions were not always possible.

To leverage most students' technological skills, I developed a meme assignment for ANTH 332: Cross-Cultural Perspectives of Globalization, and then used it again in ANTH 396: Policy & Culture, in which students were able to respond to the assigned readings for class through creating a meme. The assignment encouraged them to synthesize complex content from the readings and to identify and extract key ideas into a main point. The meme also allowed them to communicate their ideas in a creative way. The assignment added fun to our class and allowed me to evaluate their comprehension of the material.

In both of the courses, I incorporated the memes into the class meetings and more specifically, into my PowerPoint slides. To provide maximum flexibility for students, I allowed them to choose to write a short paragraph in response to the readings and post on the Discussion Board or to create a meme. Students in the courses took advantage of both options. I found some students preferred to create memes and others preferred to write paragraphs.

Here I have included the assignment and some of the memes that students' produced.



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Reading Responses

ANTH 332

Fall 2019

You will be required to post **SIX** responses based on the assigned readings for a particular day. Each response can take one of two forms: 1) a critical response paragraph or 2) a meme.

- A critical response paragraph would involve writing about 5-8 sentences that discuss how you see the texts for that day relating to the course and to anthropology and globalization more generally. This paragraph is not to be a summary of the reading, but rather you should demonstrate engagement. You could pick out 1-2 themes and focus on them in your response, or compare readings (if more than one is assigned). I discourage negative critiques of the texts, but critically engage with them. If you see issues or gaps in the work, raise them and discuss why they should be addressed. Remember that since it is only a paragraph, conciseness is key. You should try to pack as much into this small space as possible in a coherent and logical fashion, but don't bite off more than you can chew. Make every word count. Cut or revise words or phrases that aren't doing important work for you. You should think about how the readings build on or critique main themes of our class and other materials, but class materials should not be the main focus of the paragraph. Stick to the day's readings that you choose. No reference page is needed; please use in-text citations following Chicago and the American Anthropological Association. See the website below for examples:

<https://www.americananthro.org/StayInformed/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=2044>

- A meme is a concept, behavior, or idea that spreads visually via the internet. It is usually manifested in a visual, such as a picture. You can create a meme based upon the reading(s) for a specific day. Your meme does not need to be hilarious or even very creative; however, it should demonstrate your ability to reflect on the readings and create a simple visual message about it. Your meme may be more informative or thought provoking than funny, although humor (used appropriately) may be acceptable. For this option you can select a picture that is publicly available or one of your own. Next you will have to compose the phrase that you want to include with the image. The phrase should be reflective of the reading. It should summarize your thoughts about the reading and even extend to being analytical. You will want to superimpose the text on the image, meaning you will want to use a text tool to type your phrase onto the picture itself or somehow copy and paste the text on top of it. Most Internet memes use white Impact font and are somewhere between 24 and 32 pt. is the ideal size, but do what is best for your image. Many follow the bumper sticker format of using an initial, standard, declarative phrase that most people can agree with or would expect, and then subverting that phrase with a message that undermines it. You will explain what the words in your quote mean, identify your idea of the texts' themes, and explain why your quote is significant in understanding them (in an additional 3-4 sentences to the meme).

You must post your response in either form—not both—to the Discussion Board **by 9:30am on the day in which we will be discussing the readings** (i.e., the day they are assigned for, as listed in the syllabus). The forum for that day on the Discussion Board will close and disappear at 9:30am, so please be sure to post by then, otherwise you cannot post your response. You may choose to prepare a response for any six classes in which I have assigned reading, so choose to post for six of these dates: August 29; September 3, 5, 10, 19, 24; October 8, 17, 22, 29; and November 7, 12. Please note the responses are one per class, not one per reading. If there is more than one reading assigned for a day, you can focus on just one of the readings or you can incorporate all of them into your response.



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In grading the paragraphs and memes, I will be looking for the effort you put into them, your engagement with the texts, and how you think critically about the issues the texts raise. Do not be afraid to push yourself and be creative. Basically, I will consider how much time and effort you put into this assignment, as it will show through your work. Each response is worth 20 points.



PowerPoint from class including two student memes in ANTH 332 in response to the assigned chapter from *Impossible Citizens: Dubai's Indian Diaspora* (September 19, 2019)



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PowerPoint from class including a student meme in ANTH 332 in response to an article on the Swine Flu in Mexico, China, Egypt, and the United States (November 12, 2019)

Experimenting the Syllabus: Preparation for Class

I have been engaged in the process of co-developing an open access education resource, *Teaching Cultural Anthropology for 21st Century Learners*, funded by the Virtual Library of Virginia since 2020. As my collaborators and I were crafting the grant proposal, we specifically took a look at how different types of media can be incorporated into a course and into the classroom. Podcasts, contemporary case studies, films and documentaries, literature and popular media, and academic texts combined can allow for improved access and deeper engagement. Our mantra for the creation of this OER is, “learning is not so much a matter of mastering isolated facts as assimilating a body of knowledge” (Bradshaw 2005, 2). Formats for learning using multimedia in higher education have been well documented, including studies where students reported being able to retain and synthesize information through mobile learning better than through textbooks (Evans 2008).

I kept the quote from Bradshaw in mind as I developed my syllabus for GLOA 600: Global Competencies in Spring 2021. My section of GLOA 600 was designed specifically for MPH students with a concentration in Global Health. They are required to take GLOA 600 as part of their concentration. A few GLOA graduate students also enrolled in my section. We were still in the thick of the pandemic, and therefore this was an online synchronous course with one evening meeting every week. The pandemic had caused me to feel overwhelmed and trying to balance work and family was increasingly difficult for many of us, both faculty and students alike. To make the course more accessible and to accommodate for all the ways that we are being pulled every day, I designed the syllabus so that students engaged with audio and visual materials as well as academic readings each week. What I found was that students commented on the fact that they found this format to be more engaging and they were able to see key themes and patterns, as well as contradictions, across the different materials. For example, I would assign a film in which I expected students to use a concept or framework presented in one or more of the texts to analyze. I also discovered that this format allowed students to be more prepared for our class meetings. One student, who balanced her two young children with being a student, said that she could easily listen to the podcasts while making dinner or driving. Students came to class more confident, it seemed, because they had engaged deeper and in more meaningful ways with the materials. Moreover, when designing an ethnographic research project, you always try to use more than one method for data collection so that if one does not work, the whole project does not fall apart. This goes for assigning different materials as well—if students had to just skim one of the readings due to lack of time, they could still listen or watch and come to class ready to contribute.



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Bradshaw, Gary L. 2005. "Multimedia Textbooks and Student Learning," MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching 1(2): 1-10.

Evans, Chris. 2008. The effectiveness of m-learning in the form of podcast revision lectures in higher education. *Computers & Education* 50(2): 491-498.

#1 January 26, 2021 **Introduction to the Course**

* No reading assigned. Please try to post your introduction on the discussion board by the start of our first synchronous meeting today at 7:20pm, but no later than Thursday January 28, 2021 at 11:59pm EST.

#2 February 2, 2021 **Globalization and Global Health**

READ

- Manfred B. Steger and Paul James. 2019. *Globalization Matters: Engaging the Global in Unsettled Times* (p. 1-18)
- Anna Tsing. 2000. "[The Global Situation.](#)" *Cultural Anthropology* 15(3).
- Vincanne Adams. 2020. [Disasters and capitalism...and COVID-19.](#) *Somatosphere*, March 26.
- Julie Livingston. *Improvising Medicine: An African Oncology Ward in an Emerging Cancer Epidemic* (p. 1-23, Chapter 2).

LISTEN

- [Anthony Giddens: Runaway World 1999](#), Globalisation: London (The transcript is available [here](#).)
- [Episode 5: The Strange Death of Globalization with Johan Norberg](#) (April 2019)

SKIM

- [Egypt: The Flatworm's Revenge](#)

#3 February 9, 2021 **Culture, Health, and Disease**

* Monograph Analysis Selections due by start of class on Blackboard

READ

- W.H.R. Rivers. 2010. "Massage in Melanesia." In *A Reader in Medical Anthropology: Theoretical Trajectories, Emergent Realities*, edited by Byron J. Good, Michael M.J. Fischer, Sarah S. Willen, and Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good.
- Marybeth J. MacPhee. 2012. *Vulnerability and the Art of Protection: Embodiment and Health Care in Moroccan Households* (p. 3-5)
- Robert L. Welsch and Louis Vivanco. 2014. *Cultural Anthropology: Asking Questions About Humanity* (p. 371-373)
- Clifton B. Parker 2014. "[Hallucinatory Voices Shaped by Local Culture, Stanford Anthropologist Says.](#)" Stanford News, July 16.
- Anne Fadiman. 1997. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (Chapters 1 and 3).

WATCH



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- [The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: Anne Fadiman Book Talk](#) (It's over an hour and you don't need to watch it all, just a good part of it.)
- [Doctors of Two Worlds](#) (1989), available through Mason Libraries

SKIM

- [Anthropology in the Clinic: The Problem of Cultural Competency and How to Fix It](#) by Arthur Kleinman and Peter Benson
- [The Cultural Assumptions Behind Western Medicine](#) by Deborah Lupton

#4 February 16, 2021 Colonialism & Decolonization: Clinical Trials and Specimens

* Blog Topic Selections Due by start of class on Blackboard

READ

- Kristin Peterson and Morenike O. Folayan. 2018. ["Ethics and HIV Prevention Research: An Analysis of the Early Tenofovir PrEP trial in Nigeria."](#) *Bioethics*, DOI: 10.1111/bioe.12470.
- Emily Wentzell. 2017. "Medical Research Participation as 'Ethical Intercorporeality': Caring for Bio-Social Bodies in a Mexican Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Study." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 31(1).
- Kim Tallbear. 2014. "The Emergence, Politics, and Marketplace of Native American DNA." In *The Routledge Handbook of Science, Technology, and Society*, edited by Daniel Lee Kleinman and Kelly Moore.

WATCH

- [Kim Tallbear, "A Sharpening of the Already Present: Settler Apocalypse 2020"](#)

SKIM

- [History of Medical Testing Has Left Many African Americans Hesitant About the New COVID-19 Vaccine](#) by Sarah Mizes-Tan
- [Human Genome Diversity Project](#)

#5 February 23, 2021 Power and Structural Violence

READ

- Seth Holmes. 2016. "Migrant Farmworkers and the Pain of Picking." In *Cultural Anthropology: Contemporary, Public, and Critical Readings*, edited by Keri Vacanti Brondo.
- Philippe Bourgois. 2009. ["Useless Suffering: The War on Homeless Drug Addicts."](#) In *The Insecure American: How We Got Here and What We Should Do about It*, edited by Hugh Gusterson and Catherine Bestemen.
- Paul Farmer. 2009. ["On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below."](#) *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 3(1).

WATCH

- [Our Food System Hurts: Living with Migrant Farmworkers](#)
- [Paul Farmer: I Believe in Health Care as a Human Right](#)
- Optional: [Yesterday](#) (2004) – This film is only available on DVD through Mason. You may be able to watch it through another platform, but it is not required for the course. It is an excellent film based in South Africa in Zulu, but does have scenes of violence that may be disturbing to some viewers. You can watch the Peabody acceptance speech by the director [here](#).

EXPLORE

- [Hostile Terrain 94](#) – This is a very powerful exhibit that includes some disturbing images and stories (view with discretion). I highly recommend Jason De León's book if you have time in the future (not required for our class), [The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Sonoran Desert Migrant Trail](#) (University of California Press, 2015).

#6 March 2, 2021

Citizenship: The Body in Society



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* Blog Post #1: March 1-3, 2021

READ

- Miriam Ticktin, 2010. "Where Ethics and Politics Meet: The Violence of Humanitarianism in France." In *A Reader in Medical Anthropology: Theoretical Trajectories, Emergent Realities*, edited by Byron J. Good, Michael M.J. Fischer, Sarah S. Willen, and Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good.
- Asha Persson, Christy E. Newman, Limin Mao, and John de Wit. 2016. "On the Margins of Pharmaceutical Citizenship: Not Taking HIV Medication in the 'Treatment Revolution' Era." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 30(3).
- Susan Reynolds Whyte, Michael A. Whyte, Lotte Meinert, and Jennifer Twebaze. 2013. Therapeutic Citizenship: Belonging in Uganda's Projectified Landscape of AIDS Care. In *When People Come First: Critical Studies in Global Health*, edited by João Biehl and Adriana Petryna.

LISTEN

- [Fat Talk Nation](#)

SKIM

- [Neoliberalism: The Idea that Swallowed the World](#) by Stephen Metcalf
- [Searches for Livability: An Interview with Adriana Petryna](#) by Pablo Seward Delaporte and Sonia A.P. Grant

#7 March 9, 2021

NO CLASS

* Monograph Analysis due by 11:59pm EST on Blackboard

#8 March 16, 2021

History, Meaning, and Memory

READ

- Paul Farmer. 2020. *Fevers, Feuds, and Diamonds: Ebola and the Ravages of History* (Chapter 5).
- Angela Garcia. 2008. "The Elegiac Addict: History, Chronicity and the Melancholic Subject," *Cultural Anthropology* 23(4).
- Randall M. Packard. 1989. *White Plague, Black Labor: Tuberculosis and the Political Economy of Health and Disease in South Africa* (Introduction).

WATCH

- [COVID-19 April 30, 2020 Update: The Pandemic's Impact on the Native American Population](#) (American Medical Association)

SKIM

- [Why COVID-19 is Decimating Some Native American Communities](#) by Timothy M. Smith (The video above is also embedded in this story.)

#9 March 23, 2021

Pharmaceuticals and the Environment

READ

- Catherine Zandonella. 2013. ["Biehl Explores Consequences of Brazil's Constitutional Right to Health."](#) Princeton University News, January 14.
- Kaushik Sunder-Rajan. 2017. *Pharmocracy: Value, Politics, and Knowledge in Global Biomedicine* (p. 1-30).
- Cori Hayden. 2003. *When Nature Goes Public: The Making and Unmaking of Bioprospecting in Mexico* (p. 1-5).
- Chris Morris. TBD. [Dr. Morris will be a guest speaker in our class this evening.]

WATCH

- [Bird Flu Wars](#) (2007), available through Mason Libraries



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- [Morocco: Thousands Face Needless Suffering at End of Life](#) (Human Rights Watch)

LISTEN

- Optional: [Is “Big Pharma” to Blame for Rising Health Care Costs?](#) October 13, 2016, Debate from Intelligence² (Not required for the course, but also could be useful for your debate assignment.)

SKIM

- [For COVID-19 Vaccines, Some are Too Rich – And Too Poor](#)
-

#10 March 30, 2021 **Knowledge Production and Authority**

* Blog Post #2 due March 29-31, 2021

READ

- Michael Montoya. 2007. “Bioethnic Constriction: Genes, Race, and Mexicana/o Ethnicity in Diabetes Research.” *Cultural Anthropology* 22(1).
- Michelle Munyikwa. 2020. “(De)Racializing Refugee Medicine.” *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 45(5).
- Lydia Z. Dixon. 2020. “Making Women into Protagonists: Midwives Reimagine the Mexican Childbirth Narrative.” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 39(6).

LISTEN

- [How Physicians Hundreds of Years Ago Medicalized Race — And How That Legacy Lives on Today](#) (Skim article and listen to ‘Host Frank Stasio talks about ‘Medicalizing Blackness: Making Racial Difference in the Atlantic World, 1780-1840’ with author Rana Hogarth.
-

#11 April 6, 2021 **Global Flows of Technologies**

* Response to COVID-19 Piece due by the start of class on Blackboard

READ

- Marcia Inhorn. 2015. *Cosmopolitan Conceptions: IVF Sojourns in Global Dubai* (Prologue and p. 1-9)
- L.L. Wynn. 2017. “‘Viagra Soup’: Consumer Fantasies and Masculinity in Portrayals of Erectile Dysfunction Drugs in Cairo, Egypt.” In *Abortion Pills, Test Tube Babies, and Sex Toys: Emerging Sexual and Reproductive Technologies in the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by L.L. Wynn and Angel M. Foster.
- Soraya Tremayne. “The ‘Down Side’ of Gamete Donation: Challenging ‘Happy Family’ Rhetoric in Iran.” In *Islam and Assisted Reproductive Technologies: Sunni and Shia Perspectives*, edited by Marcia C. Inhorn and Soraya Tremayne.
- Nayantara Sheron Appleton. 2019. [“‘Get Back to Life’: Contradictions in and of Emergency Contraceptive Advertisements in Contemporary India.](#) *Economic and Political Weekly*.

LISTEN

- [Rough Translation: American Surrogate](#) (NPR, September 4, 2017)

WATCH

- [Rent-a-Womb-Surrogate Mothers](#)
-

#12 April 13, 2021 **The Life Course**

* Blog Post #3 due April 12-14, 2021; final day to comment is April 16, 2021

READ

- Margaret Lock and Patricia Kaufert. 2001. “Menopause, Local Biologies, and Cultures of Aging.” *American Journal of Human Biology* 13.
- Sarah Lamb. 2019. “On Being (Not) Old: Agency, Self-care, and Life-course Aspirations in the United States” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*



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- Amy Clothworthy and Rudi G.J. Westendorp. 2020. "[Risky Business: How Older 'At Risk' People in Denmark Evaluated their Situated Risk During the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)" *Anthropology & Aging* 41(2)
- Jason Danely. 2019. "[The Limits of Dwelling and the Unwitnessed Death.](#)" *Cultural Anthropology* 34(2)

WATCH

- [Keynote: "Aging and Social Justice"](#) by Jason Danely (Only need to watch Part 1)

EXPLORE

- Gabriela Ramos Bonilla and Erika Jaclyn Tirado Ratto. 2018. "[Curriculum Vitae: A photographic essay of elderly urban workers from Peru.](#)" *Anthropology & Aging* 39(1).

SKIM

- Iza Kavedžija. 2020. "["Ends of Life': AN Interview with Sarah Lamb.](#)" *Anthropology & Aging* 41(2).

#13 April 20, 2021

Debates

#14 April 27, 2021

Course Wrap-Up

* Debate papers are due by 11:59pm EST on April 30, 2021 on Blackboard



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