

**CAMOSUN COLLEGE**  
*School Of Arts & Science*  
*Social Sciences Department*

***ANTH 110 Women in Cross-Cultural Perspective***  
***Winter 2005 Section 001***

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**Instructor Information**

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This course will examine the social, economic, and political position of women in traditional, developing, and industrial societies, with an emphasis on cultural assumptions about women and theories of gender relations and stratification. This is not a feminist class, and will not explore the various topics with the exclusion of men. The roots of the feminist approach in anthropology can be found in equality, and the goal of this course is to examine a variety of issues related to women while striking a balance and considering all participants.

**Intended Learning Outcomes**

*Knowledge outcomes:*

- Outline the main tenets of the feminist perspective in anthropology
- Explain the biosocial nature of pregnancy and childbirth
- Outline the cross-cultural patterns of marriage, gender division of labour, and activities originating in the domestic sphere (such as food and textile crafts)
- Describe the potential impact of sustainable international development on women

*Skills outcomes:*

- Critically evaluating relevant topics such as veiling, seclusion, and female genital modification using cultural relativity
- Applying the feminist perspective to topics of anthropological interest

### 3. Required Materials

#### (a) Texts:

Barnes, Virginia Lee and Janice Boddy

1995 *Aman: The Story of a Somali Girl*. Toronto: Vintage Canada.

Freidl, Erika

1989 *Women of Deh Koh: Lives in an Iranian Village*. Toronto: Penguin.

Jordan, Brigitte

1993 *Birth in Four Cultures: A Cross Cultural Investigation in Yucatan, Holland, Sweden, and the United States* (fourth edition). Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press.

#### (b) Required readings on reserve in Library

Abu-Lughod, Lila

2002 Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others. *American Anthropologist* 104(3): 783-790.

Dubisch, Jill

1981 You Are What You Eat: Religious Aspects of the Health Food Movement. IN: *The American Dimension; Culture Myths and Social Realities*, S.P. Montague and W. Arens editors. California: Mayfield Publishing.

Freidel, Ernestine

2001 Society and Sex Roles. In *Applying Anthropology: An Introductory Reader*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Aaron Podolefsky and Peter J. Brown, eds. California: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Lamphere, Louise

2001 The Domestic Sphere of Women and the Public World of Men: the Strengths and Limitations of an Anthropological Dichotomy. IN: *Gender and Cross-cultural Perspective*, Caroline Brettell and Carolyn Sargent editors, pp.100-110. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

### 4. Basis of Student Assessment

#### a) Exams : 65%

There will be 2 exams written throughout the course of the semester. The midterm exam will be written in class on **Monday February 21**. The final exam will be written during the college exam period (so do not make summer plans until the college final exam schedule is posted!) Both exams are equally weighted. The exams are NOT cumulative, although some core concepts like cultural relativity and the feminist perspective in anthropology will be considered throughout the course, even if they are presented in the first half.

Exams must be written at the scheduled times. The only exception is grave illness, BUT the instructor must be notified by email or phone message prior to the start of the exam, and a medical note must be presented. There are no exceptions without a medical certificate. If a make-up exam is scheduled because of illness, students must write the make-up exam at the mutually agreed upon time as soon as possible.

**b) Assignments:**

**Experiential Knowledge assignment concerning your own birth: 10%**

**Due in class Monday, February 9**

Brigitte Jordan considers a number of criteria in her investigations of birthing practices cross-culturally, and how the information contributes to an understanding of particular ethno-obstetric systems. Using Jordan's work as a guideline, consider your own birth (if you are a parent you may consider the birth of your own child if you choose). What was prenatal care like? Where were you delivered, and by whom? Who else was present? What forms of technology were used (for example, C-section, drugs, forceps). A discussion with either (or preferably both) parent(s) will be in order to flesh out the details and to collect pertinent experiential data. How does this inform us about the cultural perspectives of birth for the culture you were born into. Organize the data collected into a 4-5 page (typed, double-spaced) paper.

**Article Review: 5%**

**Due in class Wednesday March 14**

Students will carefully consider the key points of Lila Abu-Lughod's article. The review will include a summary of key points and critical commentary of the article with respect to the course in general but also Erika Friedl's book *Women of Deh Koh*. The assignment should be approximately 3 pages in length (typed, 12 font, double-spaced). The goal of an article review is for students to get an indepth understanding of the article in question and to be able to then discuss the article's central issues in class.

**Class presentations on circumcision, particularly female genital modification: 15% (group presentation worth 10%, individual briefs worth 5%)**

Cultural relativity, a core component of anthropology is really put to the test when considering female genital modification (FGM), a cultural practice common in many traditional African contexts. Should the practice be abolished? Do we, as anthropologists and outsiders, have the right to pass judgment on such cultural practices and lobby for government intervention? In his or her own cultural context, is an individual harmed by this practice? What are the consequences of NOT participating in what is often a rite of passage and an essential identifier of group affiliation and adulthood?

At the end of the second week of class, students will form small groups that will investigate one small part of either side of this debate. Each group will prepare a formal presentation (maximum 10 minutes in length) on their topic, and each group will present their research in a round table-style debate/discussion in a special class **March 30**. Each group member will also prepare a brief of their argument that will be handed in on the day of the debate. (an explanation of what to include in a brief can be found posted on the website). Marks will be awarded based on the quality of the research and strength of the argument, presentation, and individual briefs. The goal of this exercise is to investigate this issue in detail as a class to better understand the complexities of the debate.

**Overall class participation: 5%**

Attendance is not recorded, but regular attendance is expected as passive participation in the course. Participation will be graded based on being prepared for class and asking pertinent questions, and engaging in group discussions.

**BE FOREWARNED:** Try to avoid handing in papers late, as you will lose marks!!! An assignment will be considered late if it cannot be handed in at the beginning of class. Assignments handed in after class on the due date will have 1 mark deducted (printing problems don't make good excuses!). Assignments handed in the day following the due date will have an additional 1 mark deducted. Assignments will not be accepted later than two school days after they are due.

**Please note:** extra assignments **are not** available to students to up-grade poor marks from exams.

**5. Camosun College Grading System**

The following percentage conversion to letter grade will be used:

A+ = 95 - 100%	B = 75 - 79.9%	D = 50 - 59.9%
A = 90 - 94.9%	B- = 70 - 74.9%	F = 0.0 - 49.9%
A- = 85 - 89.9%	C+ = 65 - 69.9%	I = See Calendar for Details
B+ = 80 - 84.9%	C = 60 - 64.9%	AUD = Audit

*W = Official withdrawal has taken place.*

**LEARNING SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS**

There are a variety of services available for students to assist them throughout their learning. This information is available in the College Calendar, Registrar's Office or the College web site at <http://www.camosun.bc.ca>

**ACADEMIC CONDUCT POLICY**

There is an Academic Conduct Policy. It is the student's responsibility to become familiar with the content of this policy. The policy is available in each School Administration Office, Registration, and on the College web site in the Policy Section.

[www.camosun.bc.ca/divisions/pres/policy/2-education/2-8](http://www.camosun.bc.ca/divisions/pres/policy/2-education/2-8)

Plagiarism is extremely serious. If outside sources are consulted for any assignment, proper citations must be included. Outside sources include ANY books, journals, or websites used to collect information. Citations can be in MLA or APA style (a style guide is available at the Bookstore or library for consultation). Failure to provide proper citations will result in a zero for the assignment. This includes posters or handouts used for presentations. PLEASE come to ask if you have any questions!!

**Course schedule:**

<b>WEEK</b>	<b>LECTURE TOPIC</b>	<b>READINGS</b>
<b>1</b> Jan 10-15	M: course outline W: Introduction to the course	
<b>2</b> Jan 17-21	M: What is feminism and how has it influenced anthropology? W: History of the feminist approach, continued	Lamphere article; Friedl article
<b>3</b> Jan 24-28	M: Biological and cultural aspects of the female reproduction W: Medical anthropology, and cross-cultural perceptions of birth	Jordan p. ix - 90
<b>4</b> Jan 31-Feb. 4	M: ethnographic approach W: authoritative knowledge and ethno-obstetrics	Jordan p. 147-197
<b>5</b> Feb. 7-11	M: When Reproduction and Technology Intersect W: When Reproduction gets Political: China's One-Child Policy <b>EXPERIENTAL KNOWLEDGE ASSIGNMNET DUE</b>	Jordan p.199-215
<b>6</b> Feb. 14-18	M: Walk a Mile In <u>These</u> Shoes; Gender Hierarchy and Footbinding in "Classical" China W: The Culture of Food	web resources accessed via course website Dubisch article
<b>7</b> Feb. 21-25	M: <b>MIDTERM EXAM</b> W: Cultural History and Context of the Middle East	Friedl prologue, 1, 2
<b>8</b> Feb. 28-March 4	M: Women in Islam W: Veiling, Seclusion, and Oppression	Friedl chapters 3, 4, 5, 6
<b>9</b> March 7-11	M: Marriage and Kinship in the Middle East W: Review and Discussion of Friedl's book	Friedl chapters 7, 8, 10, 11, 12
<b>10</b> March 14-18	M: Representation of Muslim Women across cultures <b>ARTICLE REVIEW DUE</b> W: Gender, Politics, and Nomadic Pastoralism in Somalia (intro. to <i>Aman</i> )	Abu-Lughod article Barnes p. 1-78
<b>11</b> March 21-25	M: gender stratification in North Africa W: no class because of lengthened Wednesday class on March 30	Barnes p. 79-189
<b>12</b> March 28- April 1	M: <b>no class Easter Monday</b> W: Group Presentations on FGM and male Circumcision (lengthened class)	Barnes p. 190-288
<b>13</b> April 4-8	M: Spirit of resistance; spirit possession as resistance W: Textiles; A Global Language of Women	Barnes afterword Friedl chapter 9
<b>14</b> April 11-15	M: Women and Development W: Current issues, continued... and wrap up	No readings: time to catch up and prepare for final exam