

UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE
PROCESS, HISTORY AND SOCIAL COMPLEXITY
Anthropology 3900
Spring 2009

Class: TR 9:25-10:40

Instructor: Dr. Jerimy J. Cunningham

Instructor Phone: 329-5102

Office Hours:

Online: Wednesday 10:30-11:30

In Person: Tuesday 4:30-5:30 PM

Classroom: UH-B775

Dropbox: A868

Instructor Office: A868

Email: On Blackboard

INTRODUCTION:

This course explores sociocultural evolution through a comparative study of seven complex societies. We begin the course by looking at the history of the concept of sociocultural evolution, focusing the various ways people have explained the emergence of social complexity and the critiques each of these has attracted. We then begin looking at examples of social and political complexity in Ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, the Valley of Mexico, the Maya, the Inca and the Yoruba. We will explore topics such as kingship, state organizations, urbanism, military organization, trade and consumption, religion, architecture, and writing for each of these early civilizations. The course concludes with an assessment of our own potential to sculpt social change.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the course, students should have the necessary skills and knowledge to:

- Describe the diverse positions that have been taken regarding the emergence of social complexity and develop their own critical analysis of “sociocultural evolution”.
- Describe major characteristics of key complex societies, including their time lines, social structures, political organizations, and religious beliefs.

COURSE TEXTS:

Trigger, Bruce G.

1998 *Sociocultural Evolution*. Blackwell Publishers, Malden, Mass.

2003 *Understanding Early Civilizations*. Cambridge University Press, New York.

DELIVERABLES

Component	Weighting	Date
Participation	15%	n/a
Midterm	20%	Feb 12
Paper proposal	5%	Feb 26
Research Paper	30%	April 16
Final	30%	Final exam period

Participation

Participation scores are based on students' contributions to class discussions. Discussions should demonstrate knowledge of the readings as well as critical thinking about the materials.

Mid-Term (20%)

The mid-term will be a mixed format exam written through the Blackboard testing labs on **February 12th** that assess student's knowledge of all materials from lectures and readings up to the date of the exam.

Paper proposal (5%)

The research paper (described below) is the most significant written assignment in the course and the two other small assignments are designed to provide you with feedback from me and from your peers that will help you prepare your papers.

The proposal is a short assignment that describes what you plan to do for the paper. To be successful, prior to completing the assignment, you will need to have assembled some key sources for your paper and finished reading enough of them to be able to briefly outline key debates present in your topic. In the assignment, you should briefly describe the issue that you plan to address in your paper and offer an opinion (even if its provisional) on that issue. You also must attach a bibliography that identifies at least 3 key sources that you have already consulted and, under a separate heading, at least 5 other sources that you plan to read. **The assignment should not exceed 500 words or two double spaced pages (not including the bibliography) and it is due on February 26**

Research Paper (30%)

The research paper may be on any topic related to sociocultural evolution or complex societies. However, because the course is structured to examine complex societies comparatively, I would encourage you to look in detail at one or two aspects of a particular ancient civilization that you find particularly intriguing. Be sure to focus the paper on a "live issue" in the relevant academic literature. **Your paper should be a minimum of 3000 words or 12 double spaced page and it should include at least 12 peer reviewed sources. It is due on April 16th.**

Final exam (30%)

The final exam will be a mixed format exam written during the exam period that *emphasizes* all material covered in the course since the midterm.

COURSE POLICIES

Percentage to Letter Grade Conversion

Grade	Percent
A+	95+
A	87-94%
A-	83-86%
B+	78-82%
B	74-77%
B-	70-73%
C+	67-69%
C	63-66%
C-	60-62%
D+	57-59%
D	50-56%
F	0-49%

Returned Exams and Assignments

I will strive to return marked exams and assignments to students within 2 weeks of their due date. Marks will be posted in Blackboard's Gradebook.

Citation Format

All assignments should adhere to the style format of the *American Anthropological Association* (<http://www.aaanet.org/publications/guidelines.cfm>). A pdf version of the guide is available on Blackboard.

Late Penalties for All Course Assignments

All deliverables lose 2% of the FINAL GRADE IN THE COURSE for each day that the assignment is late. For example, your posting is worth 5% of the final grade. An article review that is 1 day late will lose 2% of the FINAL GRADE that is allotted to the assignment, which effectively moves an initial score of 5/5 (or 100% and an 'A+') to a mark of 3/5 (which is 60% or a 'C-'). Please note that *no extensions will be granted* and delayed submissions of assignments because of illness or family emergency will require official documentation.

PowerPoint Slides

PowerPoint slides related to lectures will be posted on Blackboard *after* the lectures in which they are used. It is my goal to have the slides available for you on Blackboard within 72 hours of the lecture, however it may take longer if the lectures carry over into subsequent classes.

COMMUNICATION POLICIES

Outside lectures and office hours, the primary forms of communication in the course take place through Blackboard, including the bulletin board, email and chat rooms.

Bulletin Board

Any questions that you may have that relate to course content, course procedures, the assignments or the readings should be posted to the main bulletin board. This allows everyone in the class to see the responses that I give and it makes my life a bit easier because I won't have to answer 6 identical questions. It also will hopefully jump start the bulletin board as a venue for informal discussions about the course.

Email

Questions on more personal issues can be sent to my email box on Blackboard. I will check my email once a day during the week and I will try to reply to you within 72 hours. At certain times during the semester, I will be away from my office for 2-7 days at a time and thus I may be delayed in replying to any questions. However, I will post a notice outlining my absences on the bulletin board. *In case of emergencies*, you may contact me directly at my uleth email: (jerimy.cunningham@uleth.ca).

Office Hours & Chats

I have scheduled one block of office hours each week during which time I would invite you to drop by my office to talk about assignments, course materials or anthropology in general. To facilitate communication, I will also be holding a second block of office hours each week online in the chat room. Appointments or additional office hours may also be scheduled if necessary.

Telephone

I have posted my office telephone number on the course outline. I would stress that this is given *for emergency purposes only*. Questions relevant to the course are best directed to me through the bulletin board and email. Please use the telephone as a last resort.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE & ASSOCIATED READINGS
(SUBJECT TO CHANGE**)**

Week	Dates	Topic	Readings	
			SCE	UEC
	Jan 8	Introduction to the course	1	1
1	Jan 13 & 15	Evolutionism from the Medieval to Romantic periods	2-4	
2	Jan 20 & 22	Evolutionism in the 19 th & 20 th C	5-7	
3	Jan 27 & 29	Neoevolutionism & postmodernism	8 & 9	2 & 3
4	Feb 3 & 5	Kingship & the state		5-7
5	Feb 10 & 12	Class, family & government		8-10
		Feb 12 - Midterm		
	Feb 17 & 20			
6	Feb 24 & 26	Law & the military		11-13
		Feb 26 – Paper proposal		
7	Mar 3 & 5	Ancient systems of production		14 & 15
8	Mar 10 & 12	Trade & consumption		16-18
9	Mar 17 & 19	Cosmology		19-21
10	Mar 24 & 26	Religions & elites		22, 24 & 25
11	Mar 31 & Apr 2	Individuals and personal values		23, 26 & 27
		Mar 31 – Paper Discussion		
12	Apr 7 & 9	Constants & variables		28-29
13	Apr 14 & 16	The future of sociocultural evolution	10-12	
		Apr 16 – Paper		