



Department of Anthropology
Anthro 3350F: Society and Culture I – Historical Perspectives
COURSE OUTLINE
Fall 2026

August 14, 2026

Instructor and Course Information

Instructor: Greg Beckett (he/him)

Method of delivery: In person

Credit value: 0.5

Antirequisites: The former Anthropology 3301E.

Prerequisites: Registration in third or fourth year in any Anthropology module.

Please ensure you have the correct requisites by checking [the Academic Calendar](#).

Course Description

We are standing on the shoulders of giants – some of anthropology's most brilliant minds have grappled with how to understand social organization. In this course we will explore the history of some important anthropological theories about social organization, analyzing how anthropological concepts and categories have been constructed and reconstructed over time. We will do so by examining the work and lives of some foundational figures in anthropology from the late-19th to mid-20th centuries. We will read examples of their original (primary) work, in order to understand how particular kinds of anthropological questions or perspectives emerged out of the intersection of specific life circumstances and interests, intellectual networks and formation of schools of thought, and particular ethnographic circumstances in specific political and historical contexts. The intention is not to try to cover all major figures – many are left out! – but rather to turn an anthropological eye on anthropology itself, exploring both a series of anthropological concepts and the social processes through which anthropological perspectives are actively produced.

Some of the questions that guide this course are: How do the scholars studied understand what constitutes "society," and how it relates to "culture"? How do they conceptualize the causes of social or cultural patterning? What are the implicit or explicit boundaries of their units of study? And ultimately, what do they consider to be the proper scope of anthropology?

At the end of this course, you will have a deeper knowledge of where anthropology came from and how some of its central questions evolved over time. While much of the subject matter is drawn from sociocultural anthropology, many of the concepts we will examine also orient research and thinking in the other subfields of anthropology.

A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course's OWL site before the first day of class.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Interpret how anthropological knowledge is produced through the intersection of: particular historical moments and political contexts; personal histories and intellectual networks; and an engagement with the situations and people anthropologists encounter during their research.
- Appreciate the limits of anthropological knowledge by exploring how scholars came to know what they thought they knew, constrained (as we all are) by the conditions in which they were working.
- Analyze the underlying assumptions of anthropological writings and effectively communicate that analysis both orally (through participation in regular class discussions) and in written assignments.
- Work collaboratively with a group of peers to develop shared understandings of class readings and to prepare regular brief oral presentations on those themes.

Course Materials

Registered students will be able to access all course readings through the course site in OWL before the first day of class.

Evaluation

Grades will be based on weekly quizzes, weekly online discussion and assignments, a group presentation, two analytical essays, and a final exam, as follows:

Weekly Quizzes – 10%

There will be an online quiz each week throughout the course. Quizzes are to be completed in Brightspace before the week's assigned online lecture. Quizzes will focus on the main ideas in the required readings. They are intended to motivate you to complete all of the reading before our lecture and discussion and to help you identify key points from the readings. There will be no make-up quizzes but I will drop the lowest two quiz grades.

Weekly Discussion/Assignments – 15%

Students will complete eight discussion-based or question-based assignments. These will be short assessments related to supplemental material that connections themes from our class discussion to current issues. Assignments may involve posting discussion questions or reading responses or completing short readings/videos assignments that supplement the week's lecture. Assignments will typically be multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. There will be no make-up assignments but I will drop the lowest two grades.

Two Essays – 50% (25% each)

Students will write two essays each about 1500 words and each worth 25% (for a total of 50% of the final grade). Essay prompts will be posted to Brightspace when each essay is assigned. These essays are not meant to be research papers and will not require students to do additional library research; rather, they will entail a close reading of the course material and a careful analysis of the relevant texts, as well as our lecture and discussion from class. Due dates will be announced in the first class meeting and posted on Brightspace.

Final Take-Home Exam – 25%

The final exam will be composed of two essay questions that will ask students to make connections across the readings to reflect on the broader issues explored in the course. The final exam will be due on a date assigned by the Registrar, during the final exam period.

More information on writing assignments, including due dates, will be made available to students on the course OWL site.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com).

Please consult Western's policy on [Academic Consideration](#).

Course Specific Conditions Required to Pass This Course

In order to pass an essay course, the student must exhibit some minimal level of competence in essay writing and the appropriate level of knowledge of the content of the course. As an essay-designated course, both writing assignments and the final take-home exam in this course must be submitted and two of the three must receive passing grades in order to pass this course.

Additional Statements

Institutional Statements and Policies

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current [Academic Rights and Responsibilities](#) policies in the Academic Calendar. Such items include accommodations for students with disabilities, religious holidays, academic considerations, academic appeals, plagiarism and scholastic offences, and code of student conduct.

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

You may use laptops, tablets, or other electric devices to take notes in class. You may not record class lectures or discussions. Phones or other devices, including smart watches, cannot be worn during exams or tests.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Any submitted assignments should be your own original work. Plagiarism or the use of generative-AI tools to produce student work is an academic offence. You may use generative-AI tools to brainstorm ideas (although it would be better to talk to fellow students in the course or to come see me in office hours!), but you cannot use such tools to produce your assignments.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, in the [Scholastic Offenses policy](#).

All required written work may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the

reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western University and [Turnitin.com](https://turnitin.com).

Computer-marked multiple-choice texts and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Statement on Plagiarism

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence. All students are expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources of information and avoiding plagiarism. Writing assignments should reflect the student's own thoughts and independent written work.

Support Services

For student support services please see the [Office of the Registrar](#) and [Academic Support and Engagement](#).

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts on the [GBSV survivor support webpage](#).

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Accessible Education

Students with disabilities work with the Accessible Education office which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. Please see [Accessible Education](#) for information.

Accommodation for Religious Holidays

Students should review the policy for [Accommodation for Religious Holidays](#). Where a student will be unable to write examinations and term tests due to a conflicting religious holiday, they should inform their instructors as soon as possible but not later than two weeks prior to writing the examination/term test. In the case of conflict with a midterm test, students should inform their instructor as soon as possible but not later than one week prior to the midterm.

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