Manouchehr Shiva

**Anth180/CES180 American Life and Culture (5 Credits)**

**My Sustainability-related background**

Dealing with issues of sustainability, ecology, and environment has been part of my anthropological education, research, and teaching.

For anthropologists sustainability is extended to the idea of “preserving” the “traditional” or “local” forms of knowledge, practices, languages, values, arts, dress, customs, cuisines, etc., of communities threatened by globalization and modernization. The concept of sustainability is expanded to include cultural and linguistic sustainability, and how the local past is, or could be, variously and selectively preserved and reconstructed.

In this broader sense, my introduction to sustainability issues goes back decades ago to my undergraduate years in early 1970s. Then I was working as a research assistant for my first anthropology teacher, who was doing his doctoral research on medical forms of knowledge and practice among pastoral nomadic tribal communities of south central Iran. The research was part of a larger applied project for training local medical workers, and establishing them among such communities. These communities were going through rapid economic, ecological, social, political and cultural change. A major framework of the project was to selectively rely on, and combine, both local and biomedical (scientific) forms of knowledge and practice.

I started studying graduate anthropology in the US in the seventies, when the research orientation or perspective called cultural ecology was dominant in American (four sub-fields) anthropology. In this perspective the focus is on human communities’ adaptation to their environment, and the way such a relation shapes other aspects of their life. I studied with the late professor Wayne Suttles at Portland State University. He is best known for his contribution to the “ecological” approach to the Northwest Coast Native American studies. I did my MA thesis with him. It was a critical evaluation of cultural ecological approach to studying pastoral nomadic tribal communities of south central Iran. My emphasis was that anthropological research on adaptation should be extended to include adaption to the socio-political environment, as well as to the natural environment. And, when we are studying communities that are stratified and class-based, like those of south central Iran, the ideas of “society” and its “adaptation” are problematic and challenging, because such societies are based on contradictory interests.

In mid 1970s I moved to Seattle to study for a doctoral degree in cultural anthropology. In 1978 I returned to Iran to do my doctoral research on medical anthropology among the nomadic and settled tribal communities in south central Iran, particularly on how individuals give meaning to their health and illness practices that include a combination of local and global/modern medicines. A revolution and a prolonged war changed my research interest to issues of political economy and communal identity among the same communities. During my decade-long stay in Iran once I was funded to do research on how pastoral nomadic households try to adapt to rapid ecological contexts, such as the draught they were experiencing. The nomadic and settled households I visited with my local research assistants, were going through rapid political, social, and economic changes as well, changes that were brought about, or rather accelerated by the revolution.

Since my return to the US, I have continued dealing with changing coexistence of biomedical and non-biomedical systems of dealing issues of birth, life, and death among new immigrants (as a medical interpreter, and as an inter-cultural communication consultant and researcher).

As a teacher and a researcher, I have visited the Caucasus countries of Azerbaijan and Georgia a few times in the last several years. My main focus of research was on discourses and practices related to democracy in these post-Soviet republics. I have viewed study of democracy in the larger anthropology of “sustainable development” framework.

I rely on my past experiences of dealing with various sustainability issues as an anthropologist in my teaching at BC.

**Personal Sustainability Teaching Mission Statement**

- Critically review and discuss various definitions of and approaches to sustainability.

- Rely on a critical thinking approach to teach about sustainability, including reflecting upon knowledge production regarding various forms of sustainability.

- Discuss how various meanings, levels, and forms of sustainability are interrelated.

- Discuss how various forms of sustainability are related to other issues of different human communities, particularly issues of power and justice, and those of humans as a species.

**Sustainability and Anthropology**

In the US anthropology has been historically a four sub-field academic discipline. These are biological/physical anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, and cultural anthropology (or ethnology). Each of these sub-fields has its applied (pragmatic problem-oriented, or action-oriented) approach.

One of the defining characteristics of anthropology is its holistic perspective. In this perspective subjects are studied in a larger context, or a larger whole, of which they are a part of. For example, a given technology is studied in a larger context that includes how specific people think, act and relate to each other regarding that technology. Thus, material culture, the way people act and relate to each other, and the way people think about their material and social world and give meaning to it, make up a complex whole.

Cultural anthropology is distinguished by its ethnographic in-depth and detailed studies of specific communities in specific locations and times. From a holistic perspective, such community based studies are done in the larger regional, national, and global contexts.

It should be emphasized that applying a holistic perspective does not mean that the different elements, aspects, or levels or the larger whole are necessarily integrated. Contradiction could also characterize how the different elements, aspects, or levels, of a larger social or cultural whole are related to each other. This point is especially important when we discuss sustainability issues.

Anthropology deals with human diversity across time and space, it also deals with what we share as human beings. Issues of sustainability could be best discussed by relying on an anthropological comparative perspective.

The holistic approach is very much emphasized in anthropology, where, for example, a given technology is studies in a larger context that includes the ways people think and act regarding that technology. Behavior, technology, perception, and values are terms emphasized in anthropology, they are also at the core of a sustainable future. Anthropology provides long-term records of how humans interact with their environments, it also explores what people value and how they act and relate to each other. Sustainability is not just about conserving materials and applying technology, it also involves how people see the world, their perceptions and worldviews, and how they value different trade-offs in making decisions.

**ANTH180/CES180** is an introductory course to the US society from, mainly, cultural anthropological perspectives.

**The course is divided into 10 units or modules**.

The students are asked to do a number of assignments for each unit. The students are encouraged to do their assignments in groups.

The following are units and assignments dealing with sustainability issues:

**1) Unit Two** covers topics of history, memory, myth, and ritual in the US society.

In this unit we discuss Native American (American-Indian) groups and their encounters with the Europeans.

The following assignments of this unit deals with cultural sustainability, but for the class I use the examples of Potlatch and Whaling among the Northwest Coast Native Americans as two ritual practices with both cultural and environmental sustainability ramifications.

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**Assignment – A Native American Ritual**

Choose one Native-American group.

Do some research on their history, society, and culture.

Choose one of their rituals.

Do research on your chosen ritual and its changes during contact with the Europeans. Define cultural sustainability and describe the changes of your chosen ritual in terms of cultural sustainability.

Share the results of your research and your bibliography.

Make sure you use reliable or academic sources for your assignment.

You can use our library’s “chat with a librarian 24/7″ service available via our library’s site for this assignment. The same page has also links to databases of academic journal articles.

As individuals, give feedback (comments, questions, etc.) to another post on this assignment.

Graded

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**2) Unit Three** covers **Religion, the Religious, and the Religious-Like in the US.**

The following assignment on “Shopping Malls as Sacred Places” is part of a set of assignments followed in other units that deal with capitalism and its various aspects in the US that have sustainability ramifications.

**Ethnographic Notes Assignment – Shopping Malls as Sacred Sites**

Imagine that you are an ethnographer from a place/planet where there is no religion as a social phenomenon, and no sacred sites. In your place there is also no private property, no capitalism, no commodities, no markets, and, of course, no shopping malls.

You think that that a major “religious orientation” in this society is commodity fetishism.

“Commodity fetishism is the process of ascribing magic “phantom-like” qualities to an object, whereby the human labor required to make that object is lost once the object is associated with a monetary value for exchange. Under capitalism, once the object emerges as a commodity that has been assigned a monetary value for equivalent universal exchange, it is fetishized, meaning that consumers come to believe that the object has intrinsic value in and of itself. The object’s value appears to come from the commodity, rather than the human labor that produced it.”

After reading and discussing Jon Pahl’s articles on shopping malls, observe, and gather visual data from a shopping mall in the U.S. and people’s behavior inside the mall.

Then, describe shopping mall as a sacred place for your audience in the (imaginary) place you come from. Use of visual data will enhance your description.

Focus on writing about the mall as a religious or religious-like site. Describe the material cultural aspects of your visual data (architectural and other material aspects like commodities, …) and the way people act and think in relation to the material cultural items you provide visual data of.

Make sure that overall your notes are holistic and non-essentialist.

Post at least 1 piece of visual data per group member.

Mention the shopping mall that you observed and the time of your observation and the places in the mall you observed.

If you cannot go to a shopping mall to do ethnographic observation and data gathering, you can find images on the internet, if you prefer, and mix them with your own observations, but give specific data about the visual material.

**Malls as Sacred Sites**

http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/publications/webforum/052007/desire\_to\_acquire.pdf

**Pilgrimage to the Mall of America**

http://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/23-3\_Icons\_of\_Culture/23-3\_Pahl.pdf

Provide feedback (comments and questions) to another post as an individual class member.

Graded

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**3) Unit Four** covers **political economy and socio-economic classes.**

The focus of this unit is on capitalism and commodities, on how capitalism is based on production, distribution and consumption of commodities, on expansion around the globe, and is imbued with crisis and contradictions. In this unit the students are asked to think about the natural environment sustainability aspects of capitalism at local, national, and global levels, mainly about environmental ramifications of capitalism’s dynamics for expansion of commodities to be consumed and expansion around the globe to overcome its crises.

**Assignment 1) Your Sneakers**

In unit three you wrote about shopping malls as sacred places (of a religious orientation called commodity fetishism).

“Seattle rapper Maclemore’s music video for his thought-provoking song “Wings” is an excellent way to be introduced to idea or theory of commodity fetishism. Commodity fetishism is the process of ascribing magic “phantom-like” qualities to an object, whereby the human labour required to make that object is lost once the object is associated with a monetary value for exchange. Under capitalism, once the object emerges as a commodity that has been assigned a monetary value for equivalent universal exchange, it is fetishized, meaning that consumers come to believe that the object has intrinsic value in and of itself. The object’s value appears to come from the commodity, rather than the human labor that produced it. In “Wings,” Macklemore associates this process of commodity fetishism with Nike Air Max athletic shoes, explaining his belief as a child that the shoes would make him into a superstar athlete like Michael Jordan. The value of Nike shoes is displaced from the labour time that went into creating them, and instead is infused with an intrinsic value that comes into being through celebrity endorsement or symbols such as the iconic Nike “Swoosh.” “Wings” becomes a statement on how market capitalism seduces us into purchasing products that promise to make our lives better. Macklemore comes to this realization through the song’s narrative, exclaiming, “Nike tricked us all,” before finally realizing as the song comes to an end that “it’s just another pair of shoes.” Through tracks like “Wings,” Macklemore explores the darker side of consumption, urging listeners to critically rethink the messages imposed on us in capitalist societies that make us feel the need to constantly consume. “

http://www.thesociologicalcinema.com/1/post/2013/02/marxs-commodity-fetishism-and-theory-of-value.html

**Wings**

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2TaEisoaZY

**A Cultural Study of Nike**

http://drofilm1.edublogs.org/files/2009/07/nike.pdf

Do some research on how your sneakers are produced, distributed, consumed, and disposed of (recycled?). Then write about how and which social classes are constructed in these economic processes. Also write about sustainability ramifications of each of these processes nationally and globally.

Provide feedback (questions and comments) to another post on this assignment.

Graded

**Assignment 2) Choose one of the following**

**A) Capitalist Commodities on American Campuses.**

After an introductory note on what capitalism is and what a capitalist commodity is, provide visual material with description about different commodities on American campuses. Discuss sustainability issues of consumptions of the commodities you discuss.

Remember, your notes are for your audience and done from a holistic and non-essentialist perspective. For the holistic context of a commodity on American college campuses you can look at the national and global contexts of that commodity, for example. From a non-essentialist perspective you can look at changes of the commodity you are describing, or how different people act and think with respect to that commodity (e.g., based on gender, social class, educational background, positions in the college system, ethnicity, …).

Labor, including labor of college instructors, is a commodity in a capitalist system. Education is also a commodity (you pay a certain amount of money per course or college unit). Text books, laptops, and hamburgers are other examples of commodities on American campuses.

Minimum of one commodity/piece of visual material per group member.

Graded

**B) Social Class on a Campus.**

Read the content of the webpage page and links of the site titled Social Class on Campus

http://socialclassoncampus.blogspot.com/After an introductory note on what socio-economic class is, offer visual material and description to tell your audience how socio-economic classes are constructed, symbolized, represented, and formed on a campus of your choice. Discuss sustainability ramifications of social class construction on the campus.

Minimum of one piece of visual material per group member.

**C) Ethnographic Notes C – Sustainability on a Campus**

After an introductory note on what natural environmental sustainability is, provide visual material and description about sustainability on our Campus (or a campus) for your audience. Focus on the material cultural aspect (technological), as well as the way people act (behavioral) and the way people think (ideational) context of sustainability material cultural aspects on the campus (e.g., different garbage bins).

Minimum of one piece of visual material per group member.

http://depts.bellevuecollege.edu/sustainability/

Graded

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**American Life and Culture Class Syllabus**

ANTH 180 / CES 180

Either ANTH 180 or CES 180 may be taken for credit, not both.

Manouchehr Shiva, PhD

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Office Hours: By appointment.

**Course Description**This course provides an introduction to a cultural understanding of contemporary American society. We discuss major theoretical and conceptual principles and perspectives of present-day cultural anthropology and cultural studies, and the way they could be applied to studying the life-ways of various American communities. We explore how the perspectives and methods offered by anthropology can assist us in understanding the United States.

This is an inter-active or a seminar-like class. Class participation, questioning, and critical thinking are highly encouraged.

This is also a research-oriented class. You will actively participate in a variety of research-oriented assignments.

You will take an active part in your learning process. You are asked to participate in the class discussions prepared, work on research projects, share and actively participate in the class’s learning process, and critically reflect on what you read and discuss.

Readings

All readings and audio-visual material are online and free.

See each unit’s What to Do section to see the list of materials to be covered for that unit.

Grading – Total of 1000 points

You will all know your quiz grades in the class. The quizzes are open-book, multiple choice, and they will be discussed and graded in the class as part of your learning process.

For your unit assignments, you get a B grade if you turn them. You get an A grade if you meet the requirements. You all have the chance of revising your assignments to get the best grade possible. Review other teams’ blogs to see examples of those that have done a better job. This is a seminar-like class, it is based on sharing and commenting on each other’s work.

Class Discussion, Participation, and Ethnographic Note Assignments: 25 points for each unit - total of 250 points – 25% of total grade.

Quizzes: – 5 quizzes (one quiz per two units) – 50 points each - Total of 250 points - 25% of total grade

Total of 250 points - 25% of total grade

Quizzes are open book and could be done in groups.

Final Exam: 250 points — 25% of total grade. Covers all units.

The final exam is open book

Final Project Report: 250 points — 25% of total grade.

It is suggested that the Assignments and the Research Project Report be presented as blogs posts.

**Research Project**

The focus of the research project is an outline of a study of a contemporary American social or cultural phenomenon, event, institution or process from an anthropological perspective. It is recommended that the topic is about an American art/creative form (visual, musical, literary …)

Students choose the focus of their research project by the second unit of the quarter.

Research Projects are done in small groups (2-4).

Research Project Report– It is recommended that the research project report is done in a blog format online. The report is a re-writing of your postings about your research topic during the quarter, based on the feedbacks you have received and your own further research.

Use Proper citation and add bibliography

Research Projects should include the first, the last and at least 6 other aspects or contexts of your research topic from the following list (Each week on a different aspect). You can suggest other aspects of your topic too, if you would like to:

1) Historical context

2) Ideological, religious, worldview-related

3) Ritual

4) Socio-economic class

5) Socialization/enculturation or learning

6) Communicative, symbolic or linguistic

7) Gender

8) Family

9) Kinship

10) Generation

11) Art

12) Communal identity (racial, ethnic, national, ethno-religious, …communal) aspects

13) Power-related or political aspects

14) Material Culture

15) Embodied

16) Sustainability

17) Global or globalization-related aspects

Research Project Report is a rewriting of what you have done throughout the quarter about your research project (different aspects) based on the feedback you have received and your own further research.

**UNITS**

**Unit 1 Culture**

Understanding the Other and the Self

Culture and Cultural Anthropological Perspectives

Cultural Studies

Anthropological Fieldwork and Research Methods

Comparative Approach

Cultural Relativism and Ethnocentrism

Holistic Approach

Culture and Power

Culture and History

Culture and Globalization

Culture and Gender

Culture and Generation

Culture and Social Class

Culture and Ethnicity/Nationalism

A Non-essentialist Approach to Culture and the Cultural

**Unit 2 History, Memory, Myth, and Ritual**

Culture and Ritual

Ritual and Ritualization

Ritual and Construction of Class, Gender, Generation, Ethnic and National Identities

Ritual and Power

History and Memory

Myth, and Ritual

Native American Communities and Their Encounters with Europeans

**Unit 3 Religion**

Religion in America

Anthropological Perspective in Studying Religious Beliefs and Practices

Public and Private Dimensions of Religion in American Lives

Religions and American Politics

The Religious in American Society

American Sacred Places

**Unit 4 Political Economy and Social Class**

Political Economy and Class in the U.S.

Production, Distribution, and Consumption Patterns in the U.S.

Culture and Class

The Meaningful and the Material

Constructions of Class in America

Sustainability and Political Economy

**Unit 5 Socialization / Enculturation**

Enculturation and Socialization

Aspects of American Childhood and Adolescence

Anthropology of American Education

Anthropology of American Higher Education

Socialization/Enculturation and Sub-cultures

Media and Enculturation/Socialization

**Unit 6 Language, Society, Worldview and Culture**

Language, Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in America

Language and Power

Language and Worldview

Language, Culture and Subcultures

American Media and Language

American English and Globalization

Advertisement as Language – Sustainability and Advertisement

**Unit 7 Gender, Generation and Family in the U.S.**

Gender in America

Youth and American Culture

Representations of the Youth in the Media

The Elderly in America

American Family Patterns

**Unit 8 Communal Identities: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism**

Race and Racism in America

Constructing Ethnicity in America

Nation and Nationalism in America

Trans-Nationalism in America

**Unit 9 Power, Politics and The State**

Culture of American Politics

Power and Politics

Concepts in Political Anthropology

The State

Class, Power, and the State

Power and Ideology

Political Rituals

**Unit 10 Globalization and Case Studies**

In addition to focusing on globalization issues, based on the interest of the instructor and the students a few topics are chosen to study and apply cultural anthropological and cultural studies approaches.

Examples:

American Media and American Life

Sports in America

Violence in America

American Politics Abroad

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“EQUIPMENT AND SKILLS REQUIREMENTS

Taking an online course requires basic computer literacy and a little more. You must be proficient in navigating the World Wide Web (the Web) and may have to be able to download and install plug-ins. An online course often requires accessing the Web on a regular basis. You need a reliable ISP that seldom responds to your call with a busy signal. You need to be able to write English on a word processor, save documents and organize the resulting files, copy documents into your clipboard and paste them into another application, and attach documents to e-mail and retrieve them.”

COURSE ASSUMPTIONS

All humans learn and all humans teach. Humans learn and teach in communities, and communities embody more knowledge than any one individual possesses. These characteristics have been fundamental first to human biological evolution, and then to the origin and evolution of cultures. Formal education takes place in a special community — the learning community. The more cohesive the learning community and the more focused it is on shared goals, the more intense is the learning experience.

In the best of learning communities, both “instructor” and “students” are learners. The instructor takes responsibility for the overall goals and direction of the course, the materials, pacing, lessons, and assessment. But students must take responsibility for their own learning. They must bring questions to the table, and act critically upon the materials of the course. Learning cannot be passive; it’s hard work. Certainly it’s useful and rewarding, but like long distance running, it hurts a lot while you are doing it and feels great when you stop.

Online courses are in many ways more focused and intensive learning communities than those encountered in the classroom (“on the ground”). You will be reading a lot and writing a lot, and communicating intensively with your fellow class members.

It’s assumed that we are all there to learn some anthropology, to develop and exercise critical thinking skills, and to stretch ourselves creatively in the exploration of ideas. But above all we are all there to discover ways the tools of anthropology can illuminate our daily lives and current problems of the human condition in the U.S.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have medical information to share with me in the event of an emergency, please contact me via email or come to see me during office hours. Emergency preparedness is important! If you need course modifications, adaptations, or accommodations because of a disability, I can refer you to our Disability Resource Center (DRC). If you prefer, you may contact them directly by going to B132 or by calling 425.564.2498 or TTY 425.564.4110. Information is also available on their website at http://bellevuecollege.edu/drc/

EXPLORE THE LMC! The Library Media Center is at your fingertips! I strongly encourage you to visit the LMC at least this quarter, but you can also access it via the web. Talk to a Reference Librarian at the Library (D-126), by calling (425) 564-6161 , or by email: reference@bellevuecollege.edu.

Main Library Media Center: http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/

For the LMC online catalog: http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/catalogs.html

For article databases: http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/periodicals.html

For all of your written work: Submit proofread work only. Work not proofread will be returned once for a rewrite, expected to be handed in within 48 hours. If you need help with your writing, please make use of the following student support services:

Academic Success Center: http://bellevuecollege.edu/academicsuccess/

Academic Tutoring Center: http://bellevuecollege.edu/tutoring/

TRiO Student Support Services: http://bellevuecollege.edu/TRiO/

Writing Lab @ BCC: http://bellevuecollege.edu/writinglab/

Preventing Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty occurring when students use information or material from outside sources and do not properly cites those sources. This is grounds for disciplinary action. It is your responsibility to understand plagiarism and its consequences. Plagiarism occurs if:

a. You do not cite quotations and/or attribute borrowed ideas.

b. You fail to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks.

c. You do not write summaries and paraphrases in his/her own words and/or doesn’t document his/her source.

d. You turn in work created by another person.

e. You submit or use your own prior work for a current or past course, or work from one current course in another course without express permission from your professors. This may also be considered academic dishonesty.

f. Consequences: If it is determined that you have plagiarized or engaged in other forms of academic dishonesty, you will likely fail the assignment and possibly the course, despite points earned through other work. Acts of academic dishonesty are reviewed for disciplinary action.

WHAT COURSES IN ANTHROPOLOGY ARE OFFERED AT BC?

There is a general introductory class (Survey of Anthropology) which highlights all four sub-disciplines of anthropology. BC offers in-depth courses in Anthropology which I encourage you to take: archaeology (Great Discoveries in Archaeology; Archaeology; Ancient North America; Incas & Their Ancestors; Aztecs, Mayas, & Their Ancestors), biological anthropology (Biological Anthropology; Bioanthropology with Lab; Cross-cultural Medicine; Forensic Anthropology), cultural anthropology (Food, Drink, & Culture; American Life & Culture; Cultural Anthropology; Sex, Gender, & Culture; Environment & Culture; REEL Culture; Religion & Culture) and linguistics (Language, Culture, & Society). Check BC’s Course Catalogue for a full description of each course. We will also be offering several special topics courses spanning the discipline. Topics may include Primatology, Experimental Archaeology, Anthropology of Immigration and Scandinavian Culture. There are no prerequisites for any of these courses and they fulfill degree requirements. Different formats (on campus, on-line, hybrid) are offered. Stop by and visit the Social Science Advisor, Deanne Eschbach, in Room D110, for free professional planning and advising, or contact Anthropology Prof. Tony Tessandori (tony.tessandori@bellevuecollege.edu) to learn more about majoring in anthropology.