

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
Department of Anthropology

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Hours: sign up on WASS

ANT 203: Economic Life in Cultural Context

This course situates economic experience – needs and wants, work and wealth, the exchange of goods and values – in its cultural context in the US and elsewhere. We consider how the consumption, production, and circulation of things and ideas – in recent and past times – become invested with personal and collective meanings. We pay special attention to symbolic and political dimensions of “taste” (demand, needs and wants), “labor”, and “property” (material, intellectual, or cultural). Additionally, course participants get a taste of anthropological fieldwork by learning to set their everyday experiences into conversation with familiar academic sources and other informative resources.

BOOKS (available for purchase at Labyrinth):

- Karen Ho (2009) *Liquidated*
- All other course readings are on Blackboard (Bb), accessible by clicking the “Weekly Reading” button on the left side of the ANT 203 webpage



ASSIGNMENTS (see Appendix, p. 7 below, for details):

- 1. Informed, mutually respectful participation:** Participation means both attendance and contributions to discussion. Because this is a once-per-week seminar, a missed class will significantly impact your contribution, so please get in touch right away if you anticipate a problem. Everyone is expected to complete the readings on time and come to class ready to help identify key themes and interconnections. Confusions, criticisms, and enthusiasms are equally valuable and welcome. Sadly, past experience suggests that technology (laptops, phones, etc.) impedes rather than complements participatory learning ...so... please turn off and stow yours in class when not using it for presentation purposes.
“Participation” will be structured as follows: (a) Readings: during the first half of each seminar meeting, students will collaboratively initiate discussions of assigned readings with brief oral presentations; and **(b) Journals:** during the second half of each seminar meeting, discussion will be oriented around your journal entries (see the Appendix for details).
- 2. Papers and other writing assignments: (a) Oral presentation write-up:** 3 pp (double spaced) **due** as a post on Bb on the day of your presentation (see Appendix). **(b) Journal:** 1-2 pp (dbl spaced) entry **due** each meeting. The first half of your journal is **due** in hard copy form mid-term week; the second half is **due** in hard copy on our final class (see Appendix). **(c) Project proposal and peer commentary:** proposal (2 pp dbl spaced) **due on or before** Tuesday 11/24—no extensions. After you get my comments and go-ahead, but **no later than Tuesday 12/8**, post a revised version of your proposal on Bb. Everyone is expected to

offer constructive commentary **no later than Tuesday 12/15** (once again, see **Appendix** for details. **(d) Final paper** 10-12 pages (double spaced, including references) **due Dean's Date** in the ANT203 box (116 Aaron Burr), **HARD COPY ONLY**: see **Appendix 1** for advice & ideas.

TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

This participation-centered seminar needs your full attention: please turn off phones and close laptops, tablets, etc. when they're not being used for a presentation.

1. Introduction (9/22). Introductory discussion of course themes and emphases, including the multidisciplinary character of the readings and the particular challenges that involves. Discussion of the assignments and particularly of journal writing as a framework for developing ethnographic observational skills (no prior experience expected). Our reading this week includes Sunstein/Chiseri-Strater, which will give you a feel for “ethnographic” (writing-about-cultures) attentiveness. Our reading also includes two newspaper articles: Its title’s reference to “ritual” and “tribe” notwithstanding, Osborne’s amusing article describes a very un-anthropological form of research into consumer desires and behaviors; Singer’s article is about the work of one prominent consumer/design anthropologist at Intel. One point of these readings is to prompt you to articulate your assumptions about what anthropologists do, where they do it, and why: that’s fair game for journal writing and for class discussion.

Reading (due 9/22):

1. Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2002) “Writing self, writing cultures” (*FieldWorking* Chapter 2, pp. 55-104) – **please return to this as a resource for journal-writing in later weeks**
2. Osborne (2002) “Consuming rituals of the suburban tribe” (*NYTimes Magazine* 1/13/02, pp. 28-31)
3. Singer (2014) Intel’s sharp eyed social scientist (*NYTimes* 02/15/14)

[OPTIONAL] If you're interested, you could investigate examples of anthropological consumer and design research firms: e.g., http://www.practicagroup.com/our_people.shtml (that is, ethnographic fieldwork is not only a fun and interesting complement to conventional market and social research approaches (e.g., survey questionnaires, interviewing, focus groups, etc) -- it’s also useful and increasingly common.)

Journal discussion: For the basics, see **Appendix** (p. 7 below); you are always welcome to consult me. Please turn in this first entry for comments; after this week, there’s no need to turn in your entries until the mid-term assessment.

2. Consumption (9/29, 10/6, 10/13). We are used to two contradictory arguments, both academic and popular: that consumer society is oppressive and that it is liberating. In this seminar, we will treat consumption (“taste”, “life style”) as culturally- and historically-patterned and therefore intelligible by looking at “needs” and “wants” (the ends to which we apply our means) comparatively and over time. We will begin by treating “scarcity”—that is, the conviction that our means are limited (necessitating choices among alternative uses)—not as a universal natural condition but as a variable cultural one. Similarly, we will consider “demand”

not as a background or given condition (as it often is in economics) but as an explicit object of cultural and historical study.

(2a) Reading (due 9/29): are resources inevitably limited?

1. M. Sahlins (1972) "The original affluent society" (*Stone Age Economics*, pp. 1-39)
 2. R. Lee "What hunters do for a living, or how to make out on scarce resources" (Lee and DeVore, eds. *Man the Hunter* pp. 30-48)
 3. J. De Graaf et al. (2001) *Affluenza* (selections: pp. 1-8, 68-76, 109-118, 121-127)
- [OPTIONAL] M. Richter (2014) "Texas judge orders 'affluenza' teenager to get treatment." (*Business and Financial News, Reuters*, 02/05/14); N. Bird-David et al. (1992) "Beyond 'The Original Affluent Society (with comments)" (*Current Anthropology* 33(1): 25-47)

Journal discussion: From today onward, you can turn in your entries if you'd like advice about how to improve them. Otherwise, hard copies of your accumulated entries will be due during the 6th and 12th week meetings together with a self-assessment.

(2b) Reading (due 10/6): why do people want what they want?

1. M. Douglas and B. Isherwood (1979) "Why people want goods" (*World of Goods*, Preface/Introduction plus pp. 3-10)
 2. D. Miller (1987) "Introduction" (*Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, pp. 3-18)
 3. G. McCracken (1990) "Chapter One: The making of modern consumption" (*Culture and Consumption*, pp 3-30)
 4. G. McCracken (1990) "Chapter Four: Clothing as Language: An Object Lesson in the Study of the Expressive Properties of Material Culture" (*Culture and Consumption*, pp 57-70)
- [OPTIONAL] D. Brooks (2013) "The romantic advantage" (NY Times 05/30/13 on branding in US and China)

Journal discussion

(2c) Reading (due 10/13): historical and cross-cultural perspectives on needs and wants

1. R. Robbins (2002) "Capitalism and the making of the consumer" (*Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism*, pp. 1-31)
 2. Y. Yan (1997[2006]) "McDonald's in Beijing: the localization of Americana." (J Watson ed. *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia* [2nd ed], pp. 39-76) Also available at <http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/w/watson-arches.html>
 3. J. McCreery (2001) "Creating advertising in Japan" (in *Asian Media Productions*, ed. B Moeran, 151-167)
- [OPTIONAL] J. Watson (1997[2006]) "Introduction: transnationalism, localization, and fast foods in East Asia" (J Watson, ed. *Golden Arches East* [2nd ed], pp. 1-38); J. Carrier (1993) "The rituals of Christmas giving" (V. Buchli ed. *Material culture: Critical concepts in the social sciences*, 66-82)

Journal discussion

3. Production (10/20, 10/27). Backing up from questions about lifestyles and the like, we consider their enabling conditions: where does all our “stuff” come from and how is access to it organized? Answering these questions, we focus in on ideas about “time” and “labor”. From historically long-term and globally cross-cultural perspectives, references to natural resource constraints on production are inadequate explanations for variant lifestyles (whether we’re talking about fine cultural value distinctions or crude assessments of poverty and affluence). Consequently, we need to consider the impacts of alternative sociopolitical organizations of production and cultural factors (including religion). Recall Sahlins’s original affluent society argument and consider whatever got people to work so hard?

(3a) Reading (due 10/20): why do people work so hard?

1. A. Smith (1937) *Wealth of Nations* (Chapters 1-4, pp. 3-29)
2. A. Rabinbach (1990) “From idleness to fatigue” (*The Human Motor*, pp. 19-44)
3. M. Weber (1930) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pp. 3-125 (that is, pp. 46-166 of this pdf file). [Optional: The front matter – commentaries by Anthony Giddens and the translator, Talcot Parsons, together with the author’s Introduction (pp. i-xlii); and the endnotes, which begin on p. 169 of the pdf]

[OPTIONAL]: M. Sahlins (1972) “The domestic mode of production” (*Stone Age Economics*, pp. 41-100); F. Habermann “We are not born as egoists”.

Journal discussion

(3b) Reading (due 10/27): how did time become something you can run out of?

1. E. P. Thompson (1967) “Time and work discipline in industrial capitalism” (*Past and Present* 38: 56-97)
2. M. F. Smith (1982) “Bloody time and bloody money” (*American Ethnologist* 9(3): 503-518)
3. C. Helman (1987) “Heart disease and the cultural construction of time” (*Social Science Medicine* 25 (9): 969-79)\

[OPTIONAL] See the following YouTube video, “The Secret Powers of Time”, a lecture -- with animations -- by Philip Zimbardo (yes, that very same social psychologist you may have heard of in Psych 101): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3oliH7BLmg>

Journal discussion

The first half of your journal is due today!
Please add a self-assessment commenting on what challenged or surprised you about this assignment, on cross-cutting themes that have emerged so far in your journal, and/or on what you plan to improve or do differently in the second half.

MIDTERM BREAK Oct 31 – Nov 8



4. Forms of exchange: gift and market relationships (11/10 – 12/8). We're used to thinking about the sweep of human history in terms of a linear cultural "evolution" or economic "development": simpler, less efficient socioeconomic practices give way to capitalist/market economies over time, everywhere. While our readings and discussions have already raised questions about all that, here we'll consider the matter from the integrative perspectives of property and exchange relations – the social relational connection between production (sociopolitical and technical "means") and consumption (styles of life, economic "ends"). We'll sample the classics of anthropological "exchange theory". We'll compare gift and market exchange in particular, paying special attention to "money" (exchange media and representations of value) and to the historical entanglement of gift and market exchange. Finally, we'll consider a sampling of provocative implications and applications.

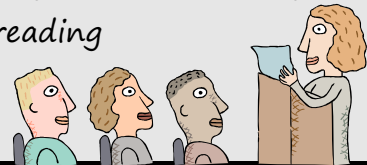
(4a) Reading (due 11/10): Classics of anthropological exchange theory – gift economies exotic and familiar

1. M. Mauss (1990; orig 1950) "Introduction", "The exchange of gifts" and "Conclusion" (*The Gift* pp. 1-18, 65-83)
 2. M. Sahlins (1972) "The spirit of the gift" (*Stone Age Economics* pp. 149-183),
 4. J. Horner (2011) "The tire iron and the tamale" (*New York Times Magazine* 03/04/11)
 5. K. Murphy (2013) "Ma'am, your burger has been paid for" (*New York Times Opinion* 10/20/13)
 6. M. Malady (2013) "Want to save civilization? Get in line." (*New York Times* 06/02/13)
- [OPTIONAL] K. Polanyi (1958) "The economy as instituted process" (Polanyi et al. eds. *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*, pp. 243-69); J. Waldfogel (1993) "The deadweight loss of Christmas" (*Am Economics Rev* 83(5): 1328-1336) and 2013 interview with Waldfogel here: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/making-sense/the-economics-of-wasteful-spen/>

Journal discussion: Do your best to draw cross-topical/cross-weekly connections in class discussion, and especially in your journal writing where it will be expected during the second half of the term and will help pave the way for your final paper.

No reading due 11/17: no class

Prof. Lederman is at the annual American Anthropological Assn meeting. Please use your "found" time to get ahead on your reading and to begin thinking about your final paper proposal, due in class on Tuesday, Nov 24.



(4b) Reading (due 11/24): Money, "money", money? Inventions and reinventions

1. NPR "[The invention of money](http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/423/the-invention-of-money)" available at <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/423/the-invention-of-money> (transcript available on Blackboard)
2. K. Ho (2009) *Liquidated* (we discuss the whole book, but pay special attention to "Introduction: Anthropology goes to Wall Street", pp. 1-38)

[OPTIONAL] M. Bloch and J. Parry (1989) “Introduction” (*Money and the Morality of Exchange*, pp. 1-32); P. Bohannan (1955) “Some principles of exchange and investment among the Tiv” (*Am Anthropologist* 57: pp. 60-70); and for a look at Yapese stone money (referred to on the NPR show), see the link on Bb.

Journal discussion

Final paper proposals are due in class today – no extensions (that is, drawing on advice in the Appendix, show me where you're at in developing a paper idea).



November 11/25 – 11/29: Happy Thanksgiving!

(4c) Reading (due 12/1): Gifts/commodities: intellectual and cultural property

1. F. Myers (2004) “Ontologies of the image and economies of exchange.” *American Ethnologist* 31(1): 1-16
2. C. Raymond (1989) “Allegations of plagiarism of scientific manuscript raise concerns about intellectual theft.” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 7/19/89 (very brief)
3. T. Gabriel (2010) “For students in Internet age, no shame in copy and paste.” *NYTimes* pp. A1, 10.
4. E. Perez (2012) “Do students have copyright to their own notes?” Available at <http://blogs.kqed.org/mindshift/2012/02/do-students-have-copyright-to-their-own-notes/>
5. J. Suk (2012) “Little red (litigious) shoes” *NYTimes Sunday Review* (1/22/2012)

[OPTIONAL] R. Coombe “Objects of property and subjects of politics” (in R Coombe ed. *Cultural Life of Intellectual Properties: Authorship, Appropriation and the Law*); K. Goldsmith (2011) “It’s not plagiarism, in the digital age it’s repurposing” (*Chronicle of Higher Education* 09/11/11); and on the commoditization of ideas, listen to this NPR “This American Life” episode: <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/441/when-patents-attack>

12/1 Journal discussion

(4d) Reading (due 12/8): Gifts/commodities: bodies for sale?

1. L. Sharp (2000) “The commodification of the body and its parts.” (*Annual Review of Anthropology* 29: 286-328)
 2. T. Trucco (1989) “Sales of kidneys prompt new laws and debate” (*New York Times* 8/1/89)
 3. D. Troop (2013) “The student body, for sale.” (*The Chronicle of Higher Education* 2/18/2013)
- [OPTIONAL] Seinfeld, Season 9: the maid episode

12/8 Journal discussion

*Revised paper proposals are due on Bb no later than midnight tonight!
Comments on fellow students' proposals are due on Bb no later than 12/15.*

5. Culture and economy, meaning and value: concluding thoughts (12/15). Our last meeting considers an influential argument (Garrett Hardin, “The tragedy of the commons”) about the social conditions for sharing, or holding in common, valuable resources. The argument was originally a commentary on global environmental futures but was subsequently used to make very general claims concerning the social logics of self interest. We will explore the difference it might make to situate the argument in relation to cultural/historical contexts. (This week’s optional readings are a sampling, for fun, of market irrationalities.)

Reading (due 12/15):

1. G. Hardin (1968) “The tragedy of the commons.” (*Science* (ns) 162: 1243-1248)
 2. D. Bollier (2002) “Reclaiming the narrative of the commons.” (*Silent Theft*, 15-25)
 3. D. Bollier (2002) “The stubborn vitality of the gift economy” (*Silent Theft*, 26-41)
 4. M. Giesler (2006) “Consumer gift systems.” (*J. Consumer Research* 33(2): 283-290)
 5. E. Yoeli et al. (2015) “How to get people to pitch in.” (*NY Times* 05/17/15)
- [OPTIONAL] R Sandomir (2014) “Commissioner sees basis for ousting Clippers’ owner”; Wagner (2012) “Water and the commons imaginary.” (*Current Anthropology* 53(5): 617-41 – skim, and read the “commentary” discussion); Rosenthal (2013) “The 2.7 trillion medical bill” (*NY Times* 06/01/13); M Giesler and M Pohlman (2003) “The anthropology of file sharing.” *Advances in Consumer Research* 30: 273-279)

12/15 Journal discussion

Final journal entry along with the entire second half of your journal is due in class: as before, include a self-assessment. Finish providing comments on other students’ paper proposals on Bb by midnight tonight.

APPENDIX: Assignments and Grading

1. Participation is worth 30% of your grade. Minimally acceptable “participation” means attendance: missing more than one week’s meeting will undermine your participation so get in touch with me if an absence is unavoidable. Strong participation also means cooperative, informed, substantive contributions to discussion in class and Blackboard. Addressing fellow students (not just the professor, is ideal. There are two formal participatory assignments:

1a Readings presentation: During the first half of each weekly class meeting, each of you will make a 5-7 minute presentation, usually in collaboration with a classmate, the point of which will be to orient and spark discussion of the readings (see 2a below). You can read your write-up or talk from notes. Either way, please balance “selfless” and “selfish” perspectives on the week’s reading assignment: Your presentation needs to **(1) provide a SUCCINCT review – main themes, arguments, and evidence** – of the readings’ authors (your “selfless” review). In making sense of the authors’ key themes, you could contextualize them by looking for connections among the current week’s readings. Your presentation also needs to **(2) set up a question or issue that grabbed you** (your “selfish” focus, which may not necessarily pertain to the authors’ main



points) for the class to discuss together. “Set up” means provide the class with enough specific background to understand your focus; then articulate an enthusiasm, confusion, or critique, or explore an implication, take a stand, etc. You are welcome to develop handouts, use the chalkboard, and so on. You are also welcome to come see me beforehand to discuss the material and your presentation strategy.

1b Journal presentations: During the second half of each weekly meeting, we will sample seminar participants’ journal writing. While we may not hear from everyone every week, each of you should come to class ready to read from that week’s journal entry. See below for journal-writing advice.

2. Written assignments are worth 70% of the grade. Written assignments can be submitted in class or in the ANT 203 box in the Anthropology office, 116 Aaron Burr.

Email attachments will not be accepted (including for the final paper)

so please plan ahead! 

2a ANT 203 journal (first half worth 15% of the grade is due in class during week 6; second half, worth 20%, is due in class during week 12). Each entry should aim to be **1-2 double-spaced pages (e.g., 250-500 words)**. Those of you who need more space are welcome to write more; however, there’s no value in length for its own sake. **A hard copy of your first entry should be turned in** for comments; subsequent entries may be turned in if you’d like further advice, but that’s up to you.

The main substantive point of the ANT 203 journal is to make explicit and conscious the entangling of “economic” and non-“economic” relations, meanings, and values in practice. The main methodological point of the journal is to explore the value of **systematically connecting everyday sources** (e.g., first-hand experience, media, conversation) and conventional **academic sources** (“book learning” – in this case, course readings on the familial, aesthetic, ritual, and other meanings and values in economic processes and domains).

In other words, the ethnographic journal is **not just a reading-response record**; it is also **not simply a diary-like record** of personal experiences and impressions: those systematic connections push it closer to “ethnographic” writing. Generally, sociocultural anthropology takes quotidian experience seriously as worthy of close description, interpretation, comparative analysis, and critical reflection. Ethnographic attentiveness isn’t something people do naturally and may be difficult at first. It takes practice to put normally unarticulated experiences into words. Your journal is the place to apply what you’re learning from the readings and classroom discussion to your life experience and, conversely, to bring experience to bear on your “book-learning”. *Anthropologists use “field” research – a more systematic, deliberate version of what you’ll be doing – as a key means for understanding the sociocultural contexts of human lives. While you won’t be doing systematic fieldwork in this course, weekly journal-writing will give you a taste of this characteristically anthropological approach and its uses.*

Journal entries can describe academic and nonacademic encounters and conversations around campus, online, and elsewhere; they may draw on incidents and observations from your own here-and-now and may also draw on memories provoked by, or that bear on, our readings and discussion themes. Each weekly seminar meeting will include a discussion of seminar members’ journal entries for that week. Especially if you don’t get a chance to share yours during class, you’re more than welcome to post your entries on Bb.

2b Presentation write-up (5% of your grade): A **3 pp double-spaced write-up** related to your class presentation is **due no later than midnight of your presentation day (posted on Blackboard: see below)**. As a guide, devote about a third of your presentation to a succinct overview of the main points of the readings you are covering (your “selfless” reading: see 1a) and about two thirds of your presentation (your “selfish” reading) to a discussion of one or two themes you found especially interesting. This discussion might take the form of a critical reflection and/or a limited number of questions or confusions about particular arguments – being specific about the aspects of the readings to which your discussion relates is important. You might focus in on connections among the readings or on their application to your non-ANT 203 experience.

Post your presentation write-up as a new discussion thread on Blackboard (give it an informative name): posting by the evening after class is fine – you are welcome to revise a bit to take account of the discussion. (If you anticipate trouble meeting this posting deadline, then get in touch with me beforehand.) You may also use subsequent journal entries as media for incorporating what you learned from the general discussion that day: clarifying, modifying, or elaborating the issues and questions you raised in class. No outside research is necessary or expected for your presentation.

2c Project proposal (ungraded): A **2 pp (double-spaced)** proposal for your final paper is **due in class on (or before) Tuesday November 24**. You are welcome to consult me in advance to discuss your ideas (or lack thereof)! Your proposal should include one to one-and-a-half (dbl spaced) pages rationale/description of your proposed topic together with a half page or so of sources (syllabus readings, library, internet, and other) and/or rationale for developing them. **If you anticipate that your sources will include interviewing or fieldwork, please see me before you begin!**

After I approve your project – but **no later than Tuesday December 8** – post a revised version of it on Blackboard: there will be a Discussion board “forum” set up specifically for this purpose. To get the most out of this assignment, please consider highlighting a few of the issues about which you’d especially like to elicit criticism and advice – and – please also bear in mind that the earlier you post your revised proposal, the more likely you will be to receive lots of comments from your colleagues. This write-up may be incorporated, in whole or in part, in your final paper.

2d Proposal peer commentary (5% of your grade): Read other students’ paper proposals as they are posted on Blackboard and offer constructive advice and critique **no later than Tuesday December 15 (the last day of Fall classes)**. “Yay!” and “boo!” comments (however verbose) won’t earn you points. Point-worthy comments can be quite succinct but they must be substantive and reasonably specific: the “point” is to give the type of helpful feedback that you yourself would appreciate receiving. Therefore, please post comments on all those proposals about which you actually have something to say; no need to force a comment if no thoughts come to mind.

2e Final paper (25%): The final paper for this course is **due as a HARD COPY on Dean’s Date BEFORE 5pm – place your work in the ANT 203 box in the Anthro office (116 Aaron Burr)**. It ought to be **10-12 pp, double-spaced** (standard font size; including References Cited but exclusive of any images). For citation format, check pp. 7-14 of the American Anthropological Association style guide (http://www.aaanet.org/pubs/style_guide.pdf) available on the ANT 203

Bb site, or follow the format used in your text *Liquidated*. Please remember to turn in a **hard copy only (no email attachments)**.

All final papers MUST engage a sampling of the semester's themes and readings explicitly: please treat class meetings as a series of working-group discussions that will support your individual research. Also, you are welcome but not required to incorporate examples and insights from your ethnographic journal. Your paper—in any of the following formats (or another of your own design)—may be oriented around or incorporate interviewing and fieldwork (beyond the ethnographic attentiveness recorded in your journal): if you plan to use these interactive research strategies, please consult me beforehand. It may also be oriented around the analysis of media sources—including print media and theater, television, and film—some of which you may have begun exploring through your journal. Finally, your paper may extend course readings, videos, films, and presentations with additional library or archival sources. But no matter what additional sources you use and format you adopt, **your final paper must engage a sampling of the syllabus readings in a substantive manner**. Please consult me in developing your ideas and your sources!

Final Paper Format Suggestions:

I. Synthesize and critically reflect on an important course theme: use or adapt syllabus topics and headnotes as springboards for your essay. Determine which course readings are relevant to your theme, remembering that most topics are elaborated outside of the units in which they were introduced. Please consult me before the proposal deadline if you would like suggestions. **Variant: develop a key theme from your journal** by rereading your entries and developing both its reading engagements and experiential connections.

II. Redesign some aspect of the syllabus: make a persuasive argument for the inclusion of a set of readings (or other media) not yet on the syllabus. This option challenges you to think about course design explicitly and in practical terms.

If you would like to write an essay redesigning the syllabus, you would need to come up with a topical unit with specific readings. Discuss the key themes of each reading, how those readings (through their themes and emphases) might work together—what issues do they pose for discussion as a result of their contrasts and partial overlaps? —and the problems an instructor might face in helping students to make sense of them.

The essay should also address how the new unit fits into the course. For example: what would be removed from the existing syllabus to make space for the new additions and why? How would you arrange or sequence the new material and why? What difference would the new readings make for students' understanding of other key issues raised in the course? That is, make as explicit as you can the rationale behind your new emphases (your sense of what is important and how these things are connected) in relation to the course as a whole.

III. Write a review essay: Beginning with one interesting, provocative syllabus item, discuss it in the context of the course readings and themes; then move outwards by 1) exploring key works engaged by the author and by 2) investigating works that cite and discuss your initial source (using a citation index or online search tool). To uncover connections, ask yourself to what conversations is this work a response (and vice versa: how was this work responded to)? Insofar as the sources you discover belong to different disciplinary traditions—e.g., anthropology; science or performance studies; social psychology; history, etc.—think about how the styles of research that different authors employ shape their emphases and silences.