

Princeton University
Department of Anthropology

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PACIFIC ISLANDERS: HISTORIES, CULTURES, AND CHANGE

This course concerns Pacific Islanders: their histories from first settlement through colonial rule, their diverse cultures, and their experience of sociocultural transformation in recent times. Throughout the semester, we will also use Pacific ethnography for the light it sheds on general questions concerning cultural difference, inequality, and interpretation/translation.

Available for purchase at the UStore:

D. Hanlon and G. M. White, eds. *Voyaging through the Contemporary Pacific*

S. Lindenbaum *Kuru Sorcery*

M. Sahlins *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities*

Available at Pequod: Course packet (all readings not included in the books above)

Requirements:

- **Informed class participation:** You will be expected to complete the readings on time, and to come to class ready for discussion. Confusions, questions, criticisms and enthusiasms are all welcome. To prepare for discussion, think about the main points of each of the assigned readings and about how they relate to one another. Develop one or two points or questions to contribute during class.

- **Papers:** **1)** due Wednesday, 3/9—a 5 pp. discussion of any set of readings developing connections across individual readings, and in relation to some aspect of your journal experience; **2)** due Wednesday, 4/20 (**no extensions**)—a 3 pp. proposal for your final paper (**if** you want to propose your own topic: **if not**, then you will receive a choice of final essay topics by the last week of class); **3)** due 3 p.m. Tuesday, 5/10 (“Dean’s Date”)—10-12 pp. final essay. **See “Assignments” appendix to this syllabus for details.**

Discussion Topics and Reading Assignments

The issues and questions introducing each "topic" below are meant to provide you with an initial sense of the relevance of that group of readings to our on-going class discussions. However, they aren't meant to constrain you: please develop further connections and questions of your own, whether complementary or critical. Notice that, while "topic" descriptions focus your attention on one set of issues, readings within each "topic" also illustrate other "topics". Also notice that our authors don't always agree with one another!

Weekly reading assignments are all required and are listed in their recommended reading order. Note, however, that the one listed last is not necessarily the least important! All article readings can be found in the course packet; they may also be found on reserve in the reserve course packet and under the name of a book from which they were drawn. Book readings are indicated in **boldface**.

HISTORICAL (DIS)ORIENTATIONS

Introduction (Mon, 1/31)

Discussion of format and assignments, and organization of class presentations. Course overview and preview of Topic 1. Discussion of what the class already knows about this course's Oceanic subject matter.

Topic 1: "First contact": the cultural politics of perspective (2/2-14)

We'll compare representations ("theirs", "ours") of intercultural contact in the context of European exploration and colonization in order to start thinking about the politics of intercultural (mis)communication. These comparisons will also enable us to think about our assumptions concerning why and how cultures change, and to contrast Western ideas about cultural difference and relations with Pacific Islander ideas about such things.

Reading (due Wed 2/2):

1. J. Hides (1936) Chapter 10 (packet, in his *Papuan Wonderland*, pp. 77-85)
2. E. Schieffelin and R. Crittenden (2000) "Remembering first contact: realities and romance" (in R. Borofsky, ed. *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts*, pp. 133-151)
3. K. Neumann (2000) "Starting from trash" (in R. Borofsky, ed. *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts*, pp. 62-77)

Optional: K. Neumann (2000) "In order to win their friendship: renegotiating first contact" (in **D. Hanlon and G. M. White, eds. *Voyaging in the Contemporary Pacific*, pp. 171-204**)

Reading (due Mon, 2/7):

1. G. Dening (2000) "Possessing Tahiti" (in R. Borofsky, ed. *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts*, pp. 112-132)
2. B. Smith (2000) "Constructing 'Pacific' peoples" (in R. Borofsky, ed. *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts*, pp. 152-168)
3. G. Dening (2000) "History 'in' the Pacific" (in **Hanlon and White, eds. *Voyaging in***

the Contemporary Pacific, pp. 135-140)

4. J. Waiko (1992) "Tugata: culture, identity, and commitment" (in Foerstel and Gilliam, eds. *Confronting the Margaret Mead Legacy*, pp. 233-266)

Film (Wed, 2/9): "First Contact"

Reading (due Mon, 2/14):

1. M. Sahlins (1981) *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities*

Topic 2: A Long View: Migrations and Innovations (2/16, 21)

When and how did the Pacific Islands come to be populated? Pacific archeology and oral history have challenged conventional, technology-centered "developmental" assumptions about human prehistory. In the Pacific we have intriguing evidence of *complex* skills and knowledge – e.g., open sea navigation and intensive cultivation – coexisting with *simple* technologies. Evidence of innovation and change forces us to recognize that there's lots of "history" with or without documentary records or Western influence. In this way, Pacific ethnography calls into question what exactly we mean by "history". A related challenge, in understanding Pacific cultures (also suggested in Topic 1's readings), is to grasp differences between familiar Western and unfamiliar Pacific ways of representing and recording (in words and other media) "time", human "agency", and "events".

Reading (due Wed, 2/16):

1. J. P. White (1977) "Crude, colourless and unenterprising? Prehistorians and their views on the stone age of Sunda and Sahul" (packet; from Allen et al. eds. *Sunda and Sahul*, pp. 13-30)
2. P. Bellwood "The peopling of the Pacific" (packet; from *Scientific American*, pp. 174-185)
3. J. N. Wilford (2003) "An early heartland of agriculture is found in New Guinea" (*NY Times*, p. F12)—**handout in class**

Reading (due Mon, 2/21):

1. R. Wagner (1972) "Origins" (packet; from his *Habu*, pp. 17-37)
 2. A. Strathern (1994) "Lines of power" (packet; from Strathern and Sturzenhofecker, eds. *Migration and Transformations: Regional Perspectives in New Guinea*, pp. 231-56)
 3. B. Finney et al. (1994) "Cultural revival" (xerox; packet; Finney et al. *Voyage of Rediscovery*, pp. 71-95).
[Optional: this reading is bound together with the book's Preface pp. xiii-xviii and Ch 1 "Without ships or compass" pp. 1-34]
 4. E. Hau'ofa (1999) "Our sea of islands" (in V. Hereniko and R. Wilson, eds. *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, pp. 27-38)
- Optional: D. A. Chappell (2000) "Active agents versus passive victims: decolonized historiography or problematic paradigm?" (in **D. Hanlon and G. M. White, eds., *Voyaging in the Contemporary Pacific*, pp. 205-228)**)

Topic 3: Anthropology in the Pacific (2/23)

Compared with other regional studies, Pacific anthropology has been disproportionately influential in the creation of modern anthropology as a discipline. It has been formative for several founding figures (e.g., Malinowski, Mead) and numerous other influential anthropologists (e.g., Sahlins, M. Strathern). It has been a site for the development of a number of the key topics (e.g., kinship, gift exchange) with which the discipline came to be identified. We'll look at Malinowski's influence on the 20th century concept of ethnographic "fieldwork". Considering Mead, we'll review some of the critical uses to which early Pacific ethnography (and cultural relativism) was put, as well as some of the criticisms Pacific Islanders and others have leveled against it (a topic to be revisited later in the semester).

Reading (due Wed, 2/23):

1. B. Malinowski (1922) "Introduction" (packet; Malinowski *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, pp. 1-26).
 2. M. Mead (1930) "Selections from *Growing Up in New Guinea*" (packet; Mead, *Growing Up In New Guinea*: Preface, Acknowledgments, Introduction, Scenes from Manus Life, Appendices I and II—about 26pp.)
- Optional: A. Gilliam and L. Foerstel (1992) "Margaret Mead's contradictory legacy" (packet, Foerstel and Gilliam, eds. *Confronting the Margaret Mead Legacy*, pp. 101-156)

PACIFIC CULTURES: A SAMPLER OF KEY THEMES

Topic 4: Exchange: wealth with and without a market economy (2/28, 3/2, 3/7, 3/9)

While Westerners often think of "primitive" or non-market economies as static "subsistence systems" (i.e., geared only to the limited needs of local populations), in fact they are organized also to produce valuables for sociopolitically- and ritually-motivated exchanges. Understanding the sociocultural dynamics of different non-market (also referred to as "gift", ceremonial, or prestige) exchange systems – like the Trobriand *kula*, Kyaka *moka*, or Mendi *twem* – was a foundational theme in early Pacific anthropology. It continues to be a strong focus today as researchers work to understand both the practical and the symbolic/moral articulations of these systems of exchange with regional and global market economies.

Readings (due Mon, 2/28):

1. B. Malinowski (1920) "Kula: the circulating exchange of valuables in the archipelagoes of eastern New Guinea" (packet; Vayda, ed. *Peoples and Cultures of the Pacific*, pp. 407-420)
2. I. Hogbin (1932) "Polynesian ceremonial gift exchanges" (packet; A. Howard, ed. *Polynesia*, pp. 27-44)
3. W. Bascom (1948) "Ponapean prestige economy" (packet; Harding and Wallace, eds. *Cultures of the Pacific*, pp. 85-93)
4. R. Bulmer (1960) "Political aspects of the moka ceremonial exchange system among the Kyaka people of the Western Highlands of New Guinea" (packet; Langness

and Weschler, eds. *Melanesia*, pp. 240-253)

Readings (due Wed, 3/2):

1. B. Finney (1993) "From the stone age to the age of corporate takeovers" (packet; Lockwood et al. eds. *Contemporary Pacific Societies* pp. 102-116)
2. L. Sexton (1984) "Pigs, pearlshells, and 'women's work'" (packet; Lockwood et al. eds. *Contemporary Pacific Societies* pp. 117-134)
3. C. Torren (1989) "Drinking cash: the purification of money through ceremonial exchange in Fiji" (packet; Bloch and Parry, eds. *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, pp. 142-64)

No class Monday, 3/7 – please work on your mid-term paper assignment!

Slide Show (Wed, 3/9): "Pigs, Pearlshells, and Money"

Optional reading: R. Lederman (1986) "The return of Redwoman" (packet; from P. Golde, ed., *Women in the Field*, pp. 361-388)

Mid-term recess (no class 3/14 and 3/16) 5 pp. mid-term paper is due 3/9 (just before break)

Topic 5: Politics: order with and without nation-states (3/21, 3/23)

Pacific cultures exemplified a wide spectrum of political types, tempting observers to treat them as "natural experiments" yielding evidence for the construction of causal models of political evolution from egalitarian bands and tribes (led by "big men") through to hierarchically-organized "chiefdoms" and class-stratified "states". However, historically informed ethnographic analysis casts doubt on such distinctions. In any case, indigenous sociopolitical structures and ideas are evident in contemporary nation building and regional politics in the Pacific.

Readings (due Mon, 3/21):

1. K. Read (1959) "Leadership and consensus in a New Guinea society" (packet; from *American Anthropologist* 65: 425-436)
2. R. Firth (1960) "Succession to chieftainship in Tikopia" (packet; A. Howard, ed. *Polynesia*, pp. 181-202)
3. M. Ember (1962) "Political authority and the structure of kinship in aboriginal Samoa" (packet; A. Howard, ed. *Polynesia*, pp. 84-92)
4. D. Freeman (1964) "Some observations on kinship and political authority in Samoa" (packet; A. Howard, ed. *Polynesia*, pp. 93-108)

Readings (due Wed, 3/23):

1. R. Foster (1995) "Print advertisements and nation making in metropolitan Papua New Guinea" (packet; Foster, ed. *Nation Making*, pp. 151-81)
2. E. Hirsch (1995) "Local persons, metropolitan names" (packet; Foster, ed. *Nation Making*, pp. 185-206)
3. R. Kiste (1993) "New political statuses in American Micronesia" (packet; Lockwood

- et al. eds. *Contemporary Pacific Societies*, pp. 67-80)
4. G. Petersen (1993) "Some Pohnpei strategies for economic survival" (packet; Lockwood et al. eds. *Contemporary Pacific Societies* pp. 185-196)

Topic 6: Gender: making sense of male and female (3/28, 3/30)

From early in this century, through the cross-disciplinary efflorescence of women's studies beginning in the 1960s, Pacific ethnography has attended to the "gendering" of cultural experience (deepening and broadening recently with studies of sexuality). Anthropologists have explored the ways in which our own presuppositions and expectations about maleness and femaleness – all intertwined with culturally loaded ideas about power, agency, sociality, and personhood -- have colored our research into gender meanings and relations in the Pacific. While our ways of studying gender have changed over the past generation, changes have also taken place in Pacific men's and women's worlds over the years. We'll consider both transformations here.

Readings (due Wed, 3/30):

1. M. Mead (1963; orig. 1935) "The lake-dwelling Tchambuli" (packet; Mead, *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, 221-255 and read Mead's book's prefaces)
2. D. Gewertz (1987) "The remarriage of Yebiwali: a study of dominance and false consciousness in a non-Western society" (xerox; packet; Strathern, ed. *Dealing With Inequality*, pp. 63-88)
[Optional: F. Errington and D. Gewertz (1993) "The historical course of true love in the Sepik" (Lockwood et al. eds. *Contemporary Pacific Societies*, pp. 233-248)]

FOCUS ON POINTS OF VIEW IN A CHANGING WORLD

Topic 7: Cosmology and crisis (4/4, 4/6)

Remembering our first theme (the relativity of encounters between Pacific Islanders and Europeans), we consider a provocative case study concerning how Islanders understand what Western observers consider to be a novel and devastating challenge to local beliefs. Substantively, the point of these readings is to illustrate the relations among local "social organization" and "religion" and Western "biomedicine" in the context of cultural innovation. Theoretically, this and subsequent sections make the point that local cultures do not *simply* respond to external events any more or less than anyone else does: they take active positions. But since their ideas, values, and arguments about what's native or foreign and what's familiar or unfamiliar, are framed in terms of their own culturally mediated historical experience, their active agency in events is not always easy for "outsiders" to understand or even sometimes to perceive.

Readings (due Mon, 4/4):

1. R. Glasse (1995) "Time belong Mbingi: religious syncretism and the pacification of the Huli" (packet; A. Biersack, ed. *Papuan Borderlands* pp. 57-86)
2. S. Lindenbaum (1979) **Kuru Sorcery**

No class Wednesday, 4/6

Remember that Wednesday, 4/20 is the "absolute deadline" for those of you who want to propose your own final essay topics!

Topic 8: Politics of cultural identities and representations (4/11, 4/13, 4/18, 4/20, 4/25, 4/27)

Continuing from the Topic 7 head notes, our values and perspectives shape our *assessments* of any people's degree of political and cultural "agency". That is, when it comes to political analysis, the types of data one deems to be persuasive or convincing are *themselves* culturally specific "political" judgements. What then are the significant points of view? Can/should divergent perspectives be reconciled? On what bases (by what/whose criteria) might they each be evaluated? In making your way through these readings, think about what is meant by, or read into, our pervasive distinction between "local" and "global" (see also earlier readings): the politically charged arguments we will read situate a region in a global context. What alternatives might we (also) employ to capture Oceanic realities? Consider also some ways in which disciplines like anthropology are not "simply academic".

Note that lots of our earlier readings bear on this topic and (also as elsewhere in this syllabus) that our authors don't always agree with one another: on the contrary...!

Film (Mon, 4/11): "Trobriand Cricket"

[Optional: J. Leach "Sociohistorical conflict and the Kabisawali movement in the Trobriands" (xerox, R. May, ed. *Micronationalist Movements in Papua New Guinea*, pp. 249-290)]

Reading (due Wed, 4/13):

1. E. Hau'ofa (2000) "The ocean in us" (in **D. Hanlon and G. M. White, eds. (2000) *Voyaging through the Contemporary Pacific***, pp. 113-131)
2. Subramani (1999) "An interview with Epeli Hau'ofa" (in V. Hereniko and R. Wilson, eds. *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, pp. 39-53)
3. V. Hereniko (1999) "An interview with Alan Duff" (V. Hereniko and R. Wilson, eds. *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, pp. 119-133)
4. P. Grace (1999) "Influences on writing" (in V. Hereniko and R. Wilson, eds., pp. 65-73)
5. V. Hereniko (1999) "An interview with Patricia Grace" (in V. Hereniko and R. Wilson, eds., pp. 75-83)
6. V. Hereniko (1999) "An interview with Alan Duff" (in V. Hereniko and R. Wilson eds., pp. 119-133)
7. A. Dirlik (1998) "There's more in the rim than meets the eye: thoughts on the 'Pacific idea'" (in A. Dirlik, ed. *What is in a Rim?*, pp. 351-369)

Reading (due Mon, 4/18):

1. **D. Hanlon and G. M. White, eds. (2000) *Voyaging through the Contemporary***

Pacific, Part III “Cultural politics”, pp. 231-273 (Chapters 10-13)

Reading (due Wed, 4/20):

1. **D. Hanlon and G. M. White, eds. (2000) Voyaging through the Contemporary Pacific**, Part III “Cultural politics”, pp. 274-330

Readings (due Mon, 4/25):

1. **D. Hanlon and G. M. White, eds. (2000) Voyaging through the Contemporary Pacific**, Part IV “Cultural media(tions)”, pp. 333-418

Final class meeting (Wed, 4/27): concluding presentation and discussion.

FINAL ESSAY DUE ON Tuesday, May 10 (“Dean’s Date”) at 3 p.m. – please place your essay in Professor’s Lederman’s box, 58 Prospect, second floor (main anthro office)
Please see “Assignments” handout (appended)

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Participation:

All class members will be expected to complete the readings on time, and to come to class ready for discussion. Confusions, questions, criticisms and enthusiasms are all welcome. To prepare for discussion, think about the main points of each of the assigned readings and about how they relate to one another. Develop one or two points or questions, emerging from your reading, to contribute during class. While formal presentations will not be assigned, I will expect everyone to come to class with responses so, **if you don't get a chance to express yourself in class (or if new issue get raised during discussion), I'll expect you to log into the ANT 352 "Blackboard" site and continue discussion there.**

2. Papers:

Due Wednesday, 3/9—a 5 pp. double-spaced mid-term assignment. This discussion of any set of four or five readings (within or across the syllabus "topics") should

- develop connections among the readings, and

Feel free to draw on, develop or comment on the syllabus's orienting head notes, if you like and if that's useful to you (it's not required).

As in your final essay for this course, you will certainly need to briefly summarize arguments from the readings that you choose to discuss, in order to "set up" the issues you want to raise. But the focus shouldn't simply be on summarizing. It should be on developing an issue that you are especially intrigued, incensed, or confused by.

Due Wednesday, 4/20 (no extensions)—a 3 pp. double-spaced proposal for your final paper **if you want to propose your own topic**. It ought to include a (2 pp.) description of the topic you plan to investigate and an (1 p.) initial list of sources. **If you do not** develop a proposal of your own (or if your proposal isn't approved), you will receive a choice of final essay topics by the last week of class. You are free to switch from your proposed essay to one of the class choices if you like in any case.

Due 4 p.m. Tuesday, May 10 ("Dean's Date")—a 10-12 pp. double-spaced final essay. A course like this – "covering" a vast region comprising peoples with diverse histories and present circumstances – cannot hope to do justice to any one place, topic, or author. You can use your final paper to complement our classwork with a more adequate, intensive focus on a topic of your choice. Alternatively (and especially if the study of Pacific cultures is new to you), you can use the paper to integrate the themes explored in separate weekly sets of readings over the course of the semester. **None of the essay topics I will offer at the end of the term will involve outside research.**

Even if you do additional, outside reading and research, I expect all the final papers to make substantive use of relevant course readings, and to draw on your personal journal in some way.