

INTRODUCING

CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY



Roberta Edwards Lenkeit



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Roberta Edwards Lenkeit
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*To Don and Allison
for all of the 3PRIM8 memories*

TO THE INSTRUCTOR

The last twenty years have seen a dramatic increase in both the data of anthropology and in theoretical issues within the discipline. It is impossible to fit everything into an introductory course, and it is my view that it is also pedagogically unsound. Less can be more. I have come to the conclusion, based on more than twenty years of teaching introductory anthropology courses, that my main task as a teacher is to excite students about the possibilities of anthropology and to teach them the core perspectives, concepts, and methods of anthropology.

This text reflects my less-is-more philosophy. With the intention of sparking beginning students' interest, I've kept the book short, included fewer—and more accessible—examples, and adopted a less formal or pedantic tone. In teaching, I've found that once I've grabbed students' attention, I need to keep them engaged before the learning process can begin. In this text, this philosophy is represented in the “Try This” exercises.

The “Try This” exercises encourage students to put the anthropological perspective into action by applying a number of different learning activities to the material they've just read. I purposefully wrote the “Try This” exercises at a variety of levels. A few are simple and don't require much analytical thought (for example, those labeled “Ponder” or “Consider”). Others, where students are asked to discuss issues, for example, require more engagement. Those with prompts such as “Compare,” “Contrast,” “Analyze,” “Apply,” and “Hypothesize” are intended to stimulate students' integrative thought processes—to help them apply concepts, perspectives, and methods.

The perspective of cultural anthropology is important. It is unique. It is significant for its implications of who and what we are and what the future holds for us. What better way to get students to see this than by asking them to actively use it?

❖ ORGANIZATION

Part I, *Basic Concepts and Methods in Anthropology*, focuses on the scope of the discipline and the methods and perspectives used to achieve the anthropological goal of understanding human culture. The chapter on culture examines the concept from a historical perspective and discusses and critiques the definitions offered by anthropologists during the past 125 years. The chapter on fieldwork provides an overview of field methods, using my own fieldwork experiences as a focus. Chapter 4 looks at communication and culture.

Part II, *Cross-Cultural Adaptive Patterns*, looks at what anthropology has discovered about the ways that culture has aided human adaptation and survival. Included are separate chapters about economic systems, kinship systems, gender and sexuality, political organization, belief systems, and artistic expression. These chapters present essential topics and supportive examples in a manner that doesn't try to be encyclopedic.

Part III, *Applying the Anthropological Perspective*, highlights what we have learned about culture change and applying anthropology. These chapters include case studies that illustrate how anthropological insights are used in problem solving.

❖ FEATURES

I've created a number of features that I hope will make this text a more useful learning tool for students:

- A brief and accessible introduction to cultural anthropology for students with little or no background in the subject.
- A concise presentation of concepts, methods, and perspectives supported by a reasonable number of detailed examples.
- A writing style that is lively and conversational as appropriate and more formal as needed to convey the principles of anthropology.
- A strong visual appeal achieved through a wealth of color photos and illustrations to invite students' interest.
- An eclectic approach to theoretical issues throughout. In Part II, though, each chapter focuses on a theoretical model, and I've used ones that are practical as part of my less-is-more philosophy. When students have a firm understanding of a few paradigms, they have a foundation on which to examine others—and think critically about all.
- Reinforcement throughout the text of the scientific, holistic, and comparative approach of the discipline. The occasional relevant issue from archaeology and biological anthropology is woven into the text to emphasize the holistic view.

- Pedagogy that asks students to think critically. The “Try This” activity prompts are integrated throughout the text and ask students to ponder, compare, analyze, hypothesize, and apply the concepts they’ve just read about.
- Two chapters unique to brief texts: a chapter on fieldwork that offers first-hand accounts of the challenges of acquiring data and a chapter that looks at sexuality across cultures.
- Learning objectives, chapter summaries, glossary terms in bold type, study questions at ends of chapters, and suggested readings to offer learning support.
- An emphasis throughout on how anthropology is relevant to students. In addition to the exercises that draw the anthropological perspective into students’ own experiences, the final two chapters demonstrate the relevance of anthropology to students.

ANCILLARIES

An Instructor’s Manual includes a test bank of about 500 multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. For each chapter there is a chapter overview, learning objectives, list of key terms, and suggested activities. In addition, the manual includes specific suggestions for integrating the “Try This” feature into your course. Sample class projects are also included for most chapters (such as using news articles, fieldwork projects, film viewing and discussion guides, and a practice kinship quiz with diagram).

A computerized Test Bank is available free of charge to qualifying adopters. It is an easy-to-use test generation system that provides all test items on disk in either Macintosh or Windows format. You can select, add, or edit questions, randomize them, and print tests appropriate to your individual classes.

A Web site (www.mayfieldpub.com/lenkeit) offers both Instructor and Student Resources. It includes an online Study Guide free of charge. Students can test their knowledge of each chapter’s content by taking quizzes and receiving immediate feedback. Also online is an image bank of figures taken from the text that can be downloaded for use on an overhead projector. The figures include key “Try This” activities, text boxes, and tables.

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Special gratitude goes to my husband and colleague, Don A. Lenkeit, who served in the capacity of in-house editor, friend, and all-around helpmate.

He generously provided a sounding board for ideas, became a cheerleader when the writing lagged, and was a stern critic when I needed one. In large measure this project reached fruition due to his loving assistance.

For her inspiration, suggestions, editing, and steadfast and loving support, thanks to my daughter K. Allison Lenkeit. She was a student at Stanford when this project began, and I'm proud to say that she is now a colleague. It was she who encouraged me to be different and write in a conversational style.

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TO THE STUDENT

Anthropology often conjures up exotic visions of distant peoples, places, and customs. But this is only part of what cultural anthropology is about. It is about examining humanity from every angle and looking at how all aspects interrelate—what we call the holistic approach. It is about the common denominators of the human experience, as well as the differences. What constitutes the exotic is usually no more than those customs different from our own. I've written this text as a brief introduction to the core concepts in cultural anthropology. It is a summary of what we have learned from our quest to understand the adaptive patterns of human cultures.

My philosophy of teaching is that less can be more. If you can digest a concept and a solid example, I believe that you will remember it. Too many examples when you are first learning about a subject can muddy everything. If you engage with this text, you will have a strong foundation to do further work in anthropology. Even if you don't plan to go on in anthropology, the perspectives of anthropology will provide you with much that is useful. Cultural anthropology is applicable to many fields—healthcare, law enforcement, education, retail business, and any other field that requires working with people. Anthropology is inherently fascinating. We discover things about ourselves as we examine other cultures, and I hope that you will enjoy this process of discovery.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

You'll find that I've provided you with many learning tools within this text:

- Objectives at the beginning of each chapter state the aims of the chapter and are signposts to what you will learn. If you carefully read

these and the chapter summary first, you will have an excellent framework to help you focus as you read the chapter.

- Important anthropological concepts and terms are set in bold type throughout and are clearly explained. The glossary at the back of the book provides an alphabetical list of all these terms along with their definitions.
- Study questions appear at the end of each chapter so that you can test yourself on chapter content.
- A free online Study Guide can be found at our Web site: www.mayfieldpub.com/lenkeit under Student Resources.
- The “Try This” prompts in the text were written to actively engage you with the material you’ve just read. Some of them are rather simple, and you can respond by just thinking about them. Others require you to be analytical and ask you to demonstrate your creativity and critical thinking skills. Recent research in the field of cognitive science reinforces that learning is tied to active involvement with a subject. Bottom line—if you engage with the “Try This” exercises, you will learn more about anthropology.
- References within the text are placed in parentheses and the full reference can be found in the bibliography. You’ll also find suggested readings that will direct you to sources for further study. The Web site addresses I’ve provided were current at the time the book went to press.

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