



# Strategies in *Teaching* *Anthropology*

SECOND EDITION

*Edited by*  
**Patricia C. Rice ■ David W. McCurdy**

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Patricia C. Rice

*West Virginia University*

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Foreword by Conrad P. Kottak

Introduction by Yolanda T. Moses

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## Editor's Preface

Four years ago, *Strategies in Teaching Anthropology* was only a glimmer in our eyes. The AAA had finished its four year task force on teaching anthropology, and in 1997, a volume of pedagogy, the first in 35 years, titled *The Teaching of Anthropology: Problems, Issues, and Decisions* (edited by C. Kottak, J. White, R. Furlow, and P. Rice), was published by Mayfield Publishing Company. But the 1997 volume was “delinquent” in one area due to lack of space, and that was an absence of any articles of a “how to do it” nature. Members of the General Anthropology Division of the AAA and its permanent teaching committee COTA (Committee On Teaching Anthropology) mounted a Call For Papers in hopes of filling that void. We were extremely happy when Nancy Roberts, publisher at Prentice-Hall, agreed to publish the volume in 2000.

In this second edition, we are pleased to present 30 new strategies for teaching our discipline. Like the strategies in the first edition, some are “quick fix tricks” for a one-class session (or less), some take a week or so, and some continue through a term, though on an occasional basis. It is not our intent to present course outlines or syllabi, but rather strategies to use in teaching introductory-level courses. Some of the principles used in these strategies can be used in upper division courses (for example, in fieldwork courses or those doing role playing), but all are suitable, and indeed “invented” for use in introductory level courses where students normally get their first taste of anthropology. Some 10 of the strategies in this second edition were published in the first edition, but because of their general applicability and timeliness, they are republished here.

We have had many positive unsolicited comments about the first edition, with people telling us they have used many of the strategies and thanking us for putting the volume together because the strategies “worked.” One of us (PCR) mentored Danelle Marable, a first-time instructor in a summer Introduction to Anthropology course for 50 students when the book was only in manuscript form and loaned it to her. She used 10 of the strategies, reporting on a weekly basis how well they all worked. She particularly liked her first day in class when she sat in the back, looking and acting “just like them.” While doing all 40 strategies in a single class might prove to be a bit too unorganized for most students, in the case of instructor Marable choosing 10 of the strategies, her class evaluated her as an excellent instructor in her first time teaching role.

The articles in the second edition are organized by anthropological subfield, and pages vii through xiii give a quick look at each article by topic, (expected) learning outcomes, and student activity. The Contributor's list also contains email listings for the authors. Some authors have written in their articles that they would be happy to supply further information. Feel free to get in touch with authors directly about any questions you might have. We are again happy to have both Conrad Kottak and Yolanda Moses contribute to the volume, and thank Nancy Roberts and Sharon Chambliss at Prentice-Hall for not only seeing virtue in publishing a book that can only improve the teaching of anthropology, but for making our jobs seamless.

## **ANNOTATED INDEX: TOPICS, LEARNING OUTCOMES, AND STUDENT ACTIVITY**

### **The Use of Bible “Stories” as a Discussion Point for Evolution Versus Creationism (Amsbury)**

- ... Biblical stories and biological evolution;
- ... all Biblical stories about creation cannot be correct because they are contradictory;
- ... no student activity until after the instructor reads two stories from the Old Testament; then the class discusses the contradictions and biological evolution.

### **Hands-On Exercises for Four-Field Introduction to Anthropology (Bentley-Condit)**

- ... skulls, burials, latrinealia, and HRAF exercises;
- ... hands-on exercises so students can “do” anthropology;
- ... students measure skull features, “excavate” burials, collect data on lavatory graffiti, and do cross-cultural analysis via HRAF files.

### **Culture as “The Rules of the Game:” Simulating Fieldwork While Playing Cards (Birns)**

- ... culture as “the rules of the game;”
- ... culture and fieldwork are paradigms of rules that just seem arbitrary;
- ... by playing a card game, students discover the analogies with culture and fieldwork.

### **Using Values Orientation to Understand the Role of Culture in Cross-Cultural Communication (Campbell)**

- ... cross-cultural values orientation;
- ... students learn their own values orientation, that of mainstream American culture, and that of one or more non-American cultures;
- ... students read, discuss, and do taxonomies on values orientations for self and other cultures.

### **How to Teach Self Ethnography (Caughey)**

- ... ethnography of self;
- ... how to do field work and discover “hidden truths” about one’s own culture;
- ... students choose an informant whose cultural background is significantly different from their own and through “field work” interviewing, compare the resultant life history with their own.

### **Nacirema Writing (Coggeshall)**

- ... writing about the relationship between assigned readings and a related subject;
- ... the importance of writing skills and how to apply the specifics in a reading assignment to a



general theme;

... 12 times a term, students write a 10-minute in-class essay on an assigned reading as a prelude to class discussion launched by that reading.

### **Family Altars in Introductory Anthropology: Making Kinship Relevant (Cohen)**

... the importance of the American family;

... how important family, friends, and pets are in our culture;

... students construct a family altar by “building” one on paper using photos and other graphics and then describing the importance of each person.

### **Dynamic Ethnography, Methods, and Next-Door Anthropology (Covarrubias)**

... local ethnography;

... how to do a focused ethnography in a near-by neighborhood;

... students choose an aspect of the group-assigned project and through class-taught methods, do a partial ethnography.

### **Building Student Interest, Input, and Engagement: Organizing Small Group Projects in Large Lecture Classes (Diggs-Thompson)**

... term team projects;

... anthropology is the study of modern, technologically complex people, not just ancient, extinct, “primitive” cultures;

... in teams of 9-10, students make in-class presentations based on one of 60 randomly chosen topics gleaned from articles in *The New York Times*; the presentations can be reports or debates and can include data, slides, or charts.

### **Discussion Preparation Guides (Ellenbaum)**

... discussion of articles or films;

... how to share information and views on articles or films;

... students sit in groups of 5, use their filled-in preparation guides, and discuss the main points of a reading or film.

### **Student Experiential Learning on Social Control, Class, and Gender (Epple)**

... mini field-projects on social issues;

... many cultural constructs are anything but “natural;”

... students go to field sites and observe rules, then break one and make similar observations, or they go to both upscale and discount stores dressed down and dressed up and observe biased treatment, or they spend a day gender cross-dressing, noting behaviors suitable for the “new” gender.

### **Acting Out Anthropological Concepts (Flinn)**

- ... acting out simple concepts;
- ... concepts such as consensus, distribution of goods and services, and postmarital residence patterns are learned by acting them out;
- ... after reading about cultural concepts, students are divided into groups and asked to design and perform specific examples of the concept.

### **Fieldwork and the Observer's Gaze: Teaching the Ups and Downs of Ethnographic Observation (Goldstein)**

- ... elevator ethnography;
- ... how fieldwork can be done and how observers impact the fieldwork encounter;
- ... students spend time in an elevator, noting behavior before and after being objects of observation themselves.

### **Potlatching Classroom Participation: Using "Prestige" and "Shame" to Encourage Student Involvement (Goldstein)**

- ... classroom participation;
- ... the principles of potlatching, reciprocal gift giving, and their associated shame and prestige;
- ... students must attempt to answer questions pertaining to recently presented class material on Durkheimian social theory in order to discharge their obligation for a gift given to each.

### **Coming of Age in Statistics (Graber)**

- ... anthropological statistics;
- ... analysis of Mead's Samoa data using Yule's *Q* and Chi-square statistics;
- ... students put the data in the proper cells, calculate frequencies, and determine whether their findings are statistically positive.

### **The Trouble With the "Race" Concept: It's All in the Cards (Graber)**

- ... the concept of "race;"
- ... the traits used to construct "races" are not concordant and therefore do not produce groups/ "races;"
- ... using two decks of manufactured cards, students easily sort one deck into two "races," but no matter how hard they try, cannot sort the second deck because more than one trait is used.

### **The Illegal Antiquities Trade, Looting, and Archaeological Ethics (Juli)**

- ... archaeological illegalities;
- ... stereotypes in archaeology and illegalities/ethics;



... through film and reading, the instructor takes students through archaeological reality.

**“TSM Cube:” Illustrating the Scientific Method (Keyes)**

- ... the Scientific Method in action;
- ... all aspects of the Scientific Method: observation, hypothesis, evidence, conclusions, fact, inference;
- ... the instructor shows a cube with numbers on it and students must do the steps in the Scientific Method to infer what number is on the bottom of the cube.

**Creating Cultures: Taking the Pain Out of Writing in Introductory Courses (LaFont)**

- ... writing fictive culture;
- ... how to apply anthropological concepts to a fictive culture through writing;
- ... students “invent” and write up a culture, giving it a history and environment as well as social, political, economic and belief systems; then a new technology arrives and changes the culture.

**Teaching Cultural Anthropology Through Mass and Popular Culture: Seven Pedagogical Methods for the Classroom (Lukas)**

- ... hands-on exercises in popular culture;
- ... how “culture is us” by doing exercises;
- ... students do partial ethnographies on popular culture, demonstrate material culture in class, do cultural snapshots and focused collages, collect data on body images, and apply anthropological theories to contemporary news stories.

**Teaching Culture Through Life History: The Spradley Approach (McCurdy)**

- ... cultural life history;
- ... how to define and use culture as knowledge, as self-knowledge and as cultural knowledge;
- ... students write about their childhood in terms of cultural categories such as “primary turf maps,” daily eating rules, and rewards and punishments from family.

**Grounding the Culture Concept, or Pulling the Rug Out From Students (Metz)**

- ... defining culture;
- ... culture is a social construction and as such, there are microcultures, main-stream American culture, self-reflecting culture, and metaculture;
- ... after discussing the various meanings and facets of culture, students apply the concept to critique TV commercials or write a mini ethnography as if they were a cultural Other.

**Reading Textiles for Cultural Messages (O’Brian)**

- ... textile “messages;”
- ... how items of material culture can give clues to social organization, gender systems, and even cosmology as well as technology;
- ... students view a collection of textiles, even trying them on, and hypothesize about their meaning and function.

### **Taking Students on a *Walkabout* (Oldani)**

- ... use of a feature film to teach culture;
- ... through viewing and discussing, students learn about civilization, “primitive,” “race,” nature, cultural relativism, modernization;
- ... students see the film and then discuss the principles observed.

### **Familiarizing the Exotic in Ethnographic Film (Pack)**

- ... viewing ethnographic film;
- ... how to critically examine the ethnographic films students see;
- ... with only their brains and eyes being active, students see films of “the primitive” from a non-ethnocentric perspective.

### **The Cultural Dialog Project (CDP): Approaching Ethnographic Texts Through Playwriting and Performance (Pedelty)**

- ... writing cultural dialog;
- ... understanding readings;
- ... students write fictional dialog with plot, characters, and dialog concerning an ethnographic encounter from a text.

### **Ping-Pong Archaeology: A Non-Destructive Field and Lab Exercise (Pollak)**

- ... simulated archaeology excavation;
- ... basic excavation techniques in archaeology from measuring to mapping to analyzing;
- ... students “excavate” ping pong balls that have been precisely set out by the instructor and analyze their symbols to find meaning and context.

### **“First Steps” in Hominid Evolution: A Lesson on Walking (Pollak)**

- ... critical thinking about bipedalism;
- ... how to dissect a seemingly easy behavior – walking – and thus learn how anatomically and physiologically complex the behavior is;
- ... students write a paragraph for “an owner’s manual” for standing/walking by either observing others or “practicing” the behavior; after reading a sample of the first drafts to the class, the instructor returns the papers for rewrites.

### **Critical Thinking in the Anthropology Classroom (Pulford)**

- ... material culture and critical thinking skills;
- ... how to analyze material culture for answers to economic and social questions;
- ... students in pairs analyze lists of garbage and write reports answering above questions.

### **Strategies for Becoming an Outstanding Anthropology Teacher: From the Student Perspective (Rice)**

- ... becoming an outstanding teacher;
- ... anthropology instructors learn what students claim to want and what they praise in teachers;
- ... students will be the recipients of selected strategies/activities to improve teacher teaching and student learning.

### **Getting Into the Act: Using Classroom Role-Playing as a Type of Participant Observation (Riley)**

- ... role-playing cultural scenarios;
- ... individuals make individual and group decisions in all cultures, not just in ours;
- ... based on instructor-written cultural scenarios, students “become” others in a controlled case study.

### **Ethnography, Humanity, and Imagination: Seeing a Culture and Society Through the Eyes of an Individual (Salzman)**

- ... individuals in culture;
- ... individuals have distinct roles in culture;
- ... students write a “sociobiography,” which is a portrait of a fictional individual, based on a classic ethnography.

### **Linguistic Models in Anthropology 101: Give Me The Cup (Sheridan)**

- ... politeness by gender in language;
- ... males and females use different forms of language having different meanings;
- ... students form groups in class and rank order politeness of one “request,” then sort for likely male or female speakers with subsequent analysis of findings.

### **Using Ads to Teach Anthropology (Spyrou)**

- ... the ubiquitous ad;
- ... ads tell students about stereotypes and everyday culture;
- ... students go through magazine ads that portray particular groups of people, discuss the implications in small groups, and then discuss the project as a class.

### **Introductory Fieldwork: the Meaning of the Gift (D. Sutton)**

- ... the “anthropology of the gift;”
- ... how to analyze gifts and put them in anthropological context;
- ... students self interview and then interview a friend to categorize and then analyze gifts.

### **Reading Between the Lines: Representing Diversity, Conflict, and the Broader World in International News Stories (S. Sutton)**

- ... anthropology and international events;
- ... the anthropological perspective makes a difference in our everyday lives relative to the world;
- ... a current newspaper article (and a set of questions) is used to provoke in-class discussion concerning a timely event that has anthropological overtones.

### **Teaching as Theater (Urbanowicz)**

- ... dramatizing the persona of a famous anthropologist;
- ... insights about the life and times of an anthropologist not attainable through normal reading or lecture formats;
- ... students are not active, but the instructor is.

### **Gender and Language: A Fieldwork Project (Wogan)**

- ... gender and compliments
- ... how to do fieldwork to collect data on one topic and then analyze the findings;
- ... students gather data, look for patterns, compare the findings to hypotheses laid out in the reading, concluding that both qualitative and quantitative data are important.

### **“Flags:” The Power of Patriotism and Nationalism; the Arbitrariness of Symbols and Significance: A Classroom Exercise that’ll Wake’em Up (Wallace)**

- ... symbols are arbitrary;
- ... that symbols such as flags are cultural and are emotionally charged;
- ... students do in-class activities that show the arbitrariness of symbols.

### **Pre-Class Fieldwork: Ethnographic Introductions (Wallace)**

- ... an ethnography of the first day of class;
- ... field methods and the ethics of doing field work;
- ... no student activity. The instructor sits in the back of the room dressed as a student, takes notes and observes behavioral patterns as students come into the classroom the first day of class. This becomes the basis for an immediate discussion of field work and ethics.

## Foreward

Conrad P. Kottak

We all have our teaching tricks and we sometimes share them anecdotally with colleagues. We may do this in meetings, conferences, or over lunch with a fellow faculty member. Usually, however, our focus at national meetings and professional conferences is the more exalted domain of research. As anthropologists, we don't talk about **how to teach** as much as we should. The second edition of this volume provides a welcome forum for another group of seasoned teaching anthropologists (some are repeat authors) to share 30 new pedagogical techniques, knowledge, and observations with their fellows. And in a sense, this is a sequel to the 1997 *The Teaching of Anthropology: Problems, Issues, and Decisions* that I co-edited with Jane White, Richard Furlow, and Patricia Rice. The two strategies "how to" volumes are the applied side of the pedagogical nature of teaching our discipline.

Anthropology's breadth supports an array of teaching strategies, and it is useful to have a number of these strategies assembled here in (another) single volume. A range of articles representing anthropology's sub-fields exposes numerous teaching "tricks." As teachers, we have discovered that some things work while others do not. Some of the strategies we use with undergraduates may not work with graduate students. One strategy that can work at both levels, when used properly, is the team project. In a large class, such projects can also reduce our workload, permitting us, say, to read fifteen papers instead of thirty. Teamwork, a tradition in archaeology and biological anthropology, is featured in several of the strategies discussed in this volume. Such joint work does pose a challenge to the lone ethnographer model that has long, and probably unfortunately, dominated cultural anthropology. But I have found that joint writing projects, especially involving teams of two students who are allowed to choose their own partner, enhances the quality of presentation. Students have to get their points across to each other before trying to explain them to me. Better, clearer writing, and higher grades result, along with a sense that even cultural anthropologists can learn to work in teams.

Often we develop special strategies for parts of the introductory course that our students find particularly challenging, such as statistics and kinship. The papers in this volume offer tricks for making comprehensible several of anthropology's "esoteric" topics. These range from the potlatch and economic exchange theory, to cross-cousin marriage and avunculocal residence. Other contributors describe strategies they use to demonstrate anthropological perspectives that contradict everyday experience and establish social categories, as in teaching about the social construction of race.

The book offers teaching tricks ranging from specific to very general applicability. Strategies involving interviewing, hypothesis testing, ethnographic film viewing, and role playing can be applied in a variety of courses. Others have more particular goals, such as using Mead's own research in Samoa to teach students the rudiments of anthropological statistics or playing cards as an analogy to culture and fieldwork (this one is diabolical!). Almost everyone who teaches introductory anthropology has learned the usefulness of using the familiar to illustrate the

novel. Students appreciate American culture examples, whether we are teaching about kinship, genetics, race, gender, rituals, or values.

This volume enhances anthropological pedagogy by assembling tricks of the trade from anthropologists working in a variety of teaching settings. For those of us who value teaching, which after all most of us do for a living, this book, once read, should be placed on an easily reachable shelf right next to the first edition. Seventy-five percent of the second edition features new strategies. You need both editions.



## Introduction

Yolanda T. Moses

President, American Association For Higher Education

The second edition of *Strategies in Teaching Anthropology* presents 30 new articles as well as revisits old favorites from the first edition that explore the teaching of anthropology across the four traditional sub-fields of anthropology. With the four sub-fields, Cultural-Social, Biological, Archaeology, and Linguistics, there are also two dimensions within anthropology: research and applied studies. One major problem with anthropology in the United States is that it is not usually taught in high schools, so the first time most students are exposed to the subject is at the college or university level. Consequently, the first exposure to anthropology and how it is taught is critical.

Anthropology professors, like most classically trained academicians, do not learn how to teach as part of their training. We learn our subject matter, often in great detail. In fact, we are often the only experts in our particular subject area in the entire world. There is, therefore, a huge gap between the student who is taking an anthropology class for the first time and faculty members who know their own “dense” subject matter, but do not know how to pitch it to their audience, to “engage” them in anthropological subject matter and its processes. I have found in my many years of teaching students (mostly non-anthropology majors), that they learn anthropology best by “doing it.”

This second edition continues the tradition of focusing on the “how” of teaching anthropology across all of its sub-fields, with a wide array of learning outcomes and student activities. For example, in Part I, the general section, the authors recommend tried and true strategies to engage students in all sub-disciplines in learning about anthropology. These strategies are particularly appropriate for students first exposure to anthropology and college classrooms in general. For example, “Discussion Preparation Guides” by Ellenbaum and “Using Modern Material Culture (Garbage) to Teach Critical Thinking in Anthropology” by Pulford give tips on how to create student successes every time by reinforcing critical thinking skills.

In Part II, Archaeology and Biological Anthropology, “First Steps in Hominid Evolution: A Lesson on Walking” by Pollak provides the opportunity for students to develop critical thinking skills around the deceptively simple art of walking, which actually turns out to be an extremely complex phenomenon. Students then write about standing or walking by observing others or “practicing” themselves. Graber’s article “The Trouble with the ‘Race’ Concept: Its All in the Cards” shows students that the traits used to construct “races” are not concordant and therefore do not actually produce biological “races.” By using two decks of cards, the students easily sort one deck into two “races,” but no matter how hard they try,

they cannot sort the second deck into “races” because more than one trait is used. Both of these examples have the ability to engage students in understanding the complex issues of hominid evolution and “race” through activities and props very familiar to them.

Part III is a new section on Language and Culture and it features gender differences explored through language in “Gender and Language: A Fieldwork Project” by Wogan and “Linguistic Models in Anthropology: Give Me the Cup” by Sheridan.

Part IV has the largest number of teaching strategies, ranging from “Acting Out Anthropological Concepts” by Flinn to “Reading Between the Lines: The Representation of Diversity, Conflict, and the Broader World in International News Stories” by S. Sutton. These authors engage students in a series of activities that challenge the familiar and reveal that which is masked or often covert.

Fieldwork is emphasized in “Fieldwork and the Observers Gaze: Teaching the Ups and Downs of Ethnographic Observation” by Goldstein. In this article, students find a field site (such as an elevator) and observe behavior, taking notes on what they find. Class discussion regarding fieldwork as well as a written paper follow. In “The Rules of the Game: Simulating Fieldwork by Playing Cards,” Birns plays cards with a group of students while the rest of the class watches. This exercise is used as an analogy to doing fieldwork.

The hallmark of cultural-social anthropology is ethnography. I am pleased to see that the second edition of this book also contains articles that directly teach ethnography. Wallace’s “Pre-Class Fieldwork: Ethnographic Introductions” from the first edition is joined by “Ethnography, Humanity, and Imagination: Seeing a Culture and Society Through the Eyes of an Individual” by Salzman and “Dynamic Ethnography, Methods, and Next-Door Anthropology” by Covarrubias. These provide an opportunity for students to experience and write ethnographies from a communal as well as personal perspective.

Thank you again to the editors, Patricia Rice and David McCurdy, for bringing together another talented group of colleagues to share their best practices with other teachers, anthropologists, and non-anthropologists so that we can continue to provide our undergraduate students with the best experiences possible in their discovery of the wonder of anthropology, the discipline of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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