Anthropology is the study of all aspects of the human experience—including our origins, our languages, our pre—history, our cultural worlds, our genetics, and so on. It is a very, very broad field of knowledge and therefore most Introduction to Anthropology courses provide students with a wide-ranging survey of different topics and “cultures,” devoting a week per topic and chapter in a textbook. Research suggests that most students forget the vast majority of what they “learn” in courses like that, so I conduct this course differently. As you’ll see below, it is not a lecture course. It is a course which will have you grapple with important areas of knowledge and issues that have faced and continue to face us as humans. I emphasize how people learn culture as children and thus learn the ways of the people around us – becoming largely uncomfortable with people unlike us unless we learn to embrace our cultural discomforts too. This course will challenge you to do so.

Course Objectives: These are split into two types of objectives

Knowledge and Understanding Objectives
- To identify and question your (likely) unstated assumptions about people, human “nature,” human existence and culture. And to improve your understanding of all these.
- Be able to explain where the word “culture” comes from, differentiate its varied meanings and explain why it often confuses people
- To understand and be able to explain to others at least three ways that people learn to think and behave in patterned ways intelligible to others around them but different from many if not most others in the world
- To understand and be able to explain at least three ways people come to feel belonging with other people and three ways that we also learn to differentiate ourselves from others.
- To "see" your own cultural practices and be able to compare and contrast them to those of other peoples using analytical tools learned in this course

Applications of Course Content to the “Real” World: Applied Course Objectives
- To identify and analyze your cultural discomforts and to expand them across at least one cultural boundary
- To gain greater ability to creatively cultivate connections with other people, particularly people who are culturally dissimilar from yourself, and to exercise that ability in at least one new way
- To know and be able to explain to others at least three ways that anthropological knowledge can enhance different occupations
- To be able to discuss and explain at least three ways that culture affects not only how we view problems but also how we go about solving problems
- To gain experience working in teams and to increase your appreciation of teams
- To gain experience with and appreciation for active learning through avid participation with your team and class but also by taking individual responsibility for learning and for helping others learn

Required Texts are available at the bookstore; copies on 2-hour reserve at Green Library
(1) Mahler (my new book) Culture as Comfort (available in paperback and e-versions for Kindle, Nook)
(2) Additional Readings, etc.: Non-text required readings as PDFs and other materials such streaming video and audio files will be available through the course website on Blackboard. Look for them under the label “Required Preparatory Work” inside the module for each week. Go through the entire list of readings, videos to watch, etc. before coming to class to be prepared for class. Readings, etc. should always be done in the order presented because I think it will enhance your understanding this way. To ensure you do this work, many classes will begin with quizzes on these materials. Warnings about videos: (1) best way to
handle them is to click the link, start the video and then pause it for several minutes so that it begins loading and does not stop and start while you wait for it to stream and (2) many of them I have found through youtube and thus start with commercials. Just ignore those or skip them whenever you can. Necessary evil of “free” URLs.

**Websites & Software You Will Need to Use and Probably Download:**

1. **Blackboard** (login via fiu.blackboard.com and check that you can access the course website). Technical problems? Call UTS at 305.348.2284 or go to Green Library Rm. 150. *Make sure your computer works well with Blackboard. If you have any compatibility problems, get help from the experts not the instructor!!.*

2. You will find that most of your required work each week consists of readings in PDF, videos, audio, webpages, etc. They are set to open in NEW tabs on your browser so you don’t get lost when you click on these resources. However, you are going to need to make sure that the computer you use to access these materials has all the **software needed** to read PDFs (*Adobe Acrobat Reader*), software for streaming videos and audio (e.g., *Real Player* or *VLC*). If your computer does all this now, great. If not, get it.

3. **Internet browser:** Not all browsers are the same especially for this course. You should be using either Mozilla Firefox or Google’s Chrome. I prefer Firefox because it allows you to put in a setting to surf the web without leaving data points everywhere. But your choice. Just avoid Microsoft’s Internet Explorer because it will give you problems. You’ll also need to allow pop-ups for many of the websites in order to get to the materials. You can add those exceptions without allowing pop-ups for all websites. Problems? Pose your problem question to your team, the class or call technical help at FIU at 305.348.2814.

If there is a broken link or some similar issue on my part (the instructor), send an email to me at my regular FIU email (mahlers@fiu.edu) right away. If you still do not understand the material you can (1) get assistance from your team members and (2) get assistance from me and/or the TA during office hours or by appointment.

**Class Structure:** This is *not* a lecture course; it utilizes Team-Based Learning (TBL). Most likely you have never been in a course using TBL so please read carefully: TBL de-emphasizes learning content via class lecture and instead utilizes most class time for applying and enhancing knowledge through in-class team projects. *Don’t confuse teams with groups.* You will learn the difference; for now, *please do not think this will be a class with group projects.* Rather, you will be expected to get exposure to the course content *prior* to class, will be quizzed on your understanding of this content in class, and then you’ll spend most class time applying this information via short in-class projects with your team. You will be assessed for both your individual and team work – see grading below.

Learning is not the same as reading, watching etc. Research shows that it takes most people several exposures to new content to learn it which is why in this course you *start* learning material through the required preparation work, then apply the content in class and then you are assessed in different ways. This approach helps knowledge and critical thinking “stick” but it may seem strange to you at first. That’s intended. Taking you outside your educational comfort zone is why you’re in college in the first place and in my class you’ll be outside your cultural comfort zone much if not most of the time. This may be the only anthropology course you take in your entire life, so my goal is that key understandings about human life and human “nature” stay with you for a lifetime – and are not forgotten within six months as is true of most course content.

**Contacting Instructor/TA:** Need help or have questions? Feel free to stop by during our office hours or write us an email. Please use the Blackboard email tool for most correspondence with Prof. Mahler and the TA. Only when you need immediate response (less than 24 hours) should you email us using our regular emails: mahlers@fiu.edu & TA Jacqueline Lyon <sra.jacquelinda@gmail.com>. Additionally, the instructor and/or TA will likely schedule Adobe Connect help sessions prior to the midterm and final and, upon request, at other times during the semester. Just ask for help!

**Requirements:** You are expected to come to every class, arrive on time and come to class *having done the work posted online for the week.* Additionally, you must participate in class and in your team. You cannot be a slacker because your team will know and they will evaluate your contributions at the end of the semester. As an FIU student, you are always expected to abide by the university’s policies particularly those governing academic
honesty and plagiarism as they appear in the FIU Student Handbook (more on that below). I also require that you be ready to have some fun. Learning should be fun…

**Assessments, Grading & Tardiness:**

There are different measures of your performance in this course, many of them individual and some of them team-based. Here are the different measures. As you will read at the end of this segment, you have some power to apply different weights (importance or % of your total grade) to these different measures. Read carefully.

**Individual Assessments** these sum to 70% of your final grade

- **Individual Readiness Assurance Tests (iRATs) AKA short quizzes (15% of final grade goes to average):**
  These are short 10-question multiple choice quizzes (see caveat below) on the week’s content that you will take individually and closed book at the start of many classes to assess how well you have studied and absorbed a particular content area. Quiz dates are in week folders and on your calendar. You receive an individual grade for each iRAT (maximum is 50 points/quiz). These grades are averaged so you end up with a final grade for your iRAT performance. Miss an iRAT and you cannot get a make-up. However, I will drop every student’s lowest iRAT score of the semester, so if you miss one and get a zero, it will be dropped. Miss more than one and your iRAT score will suffer—unless your absence is excused (see attendance below). The iRATs are 10 questions each worth 5 points. They are not designed to be easy; they are designed to make you think about each possible answer choice before you select the best one. To do well you will have to study. Your grade for the iRATs will be curved based on how the class does. Your average grade (after your lowest score is dropped) will be curved against all other students’ grades. How do you know how you’re doing? Watch the statistics for each RAT. If you are doing above the course mean/median you are in B or A territory depending on how much higher you’re doing; the reverse is true for being below the median.

- **Short Individual Assignments 15% of your final grade.** Each of these will be graded according criteria from to a rubric (see this in Blackboard). Your grades for all assignments will be averaged and that grade will factor into your final semester grade average.

- **Exams:** You will have a midterm and a final each worth 15% of your final grade.

- **Outside Class Assignment:** 10% of your final grade. You will have one assignment involving more thought and analysis than the short assignments. It is called “Beyond my cultural comforts” and will be assigned during the first month of class.

**Team-Based Learning Assessments** 30% of final grade

TBL is a very important part of this course and it involves several different activities that you will be graded on. The sum total of all these grades will constitute 30% of your final grade, 10% for each type of assessment:

- **Team Readiness Assurance Tests (tRATs) (15% of final grade).** tRATs are quizzes that involve the same questions you take with the iRATs. You re-do the same questions with your team while your iRATs are scored. Unlike with the iRAT, you must discuss your answers with your teammates (but closed book) and make team decisions about answers. These are graded separately from the iRATs; you receive a team grade for each tRAT. Student team members absent during tRATs will get a zero for this tRAT as with the iRAT. As with the iRATs, each student’s lowest tRAT score will be dropped then summed and then averaged. As with the iRATs, your grade for the tRATs will be curved based on how the class does. Your average grade (after your lowest score is dropped) will be curved against all other teams’ grades. How do you know how you’re doing? Watch the statistics for each RAT. If you are doing above the course mean/median you are in B or A territory depending on how much higher you’re doing; the reverse is true for being below the median.

- **Evaluation of Your Team Members (15% of final grade).** During the midterm exam, you will do an ungraded assessment of the performance of your team members. This is peer evaluation; you will get back anonymous feedback from your team members. Given that this assessment is made in the middle,
any issues teams/team members have with team members should be communicated to problematic team
members before or during the midsemester evaluation. (See below for more on team issues and how to
resolve them). At the end of the semester, you will assess your teammates for a grade. Each team
member will assess all the others and be assessed by all the others.

Extra Credit Opportunities: During the semester you will have some opportunities to get extra credit. One
significant opportunity will be to participate as an interviewee and/or in a survey by another course on research
methods. Expect more information on this midsemester. Additionally, there may be credit give to you for
attending events outside of class, etc. And there will be extra credit given to you for suggesting new materials to
use in class (That will be done through a forum each week on the class’s bulletin board in Blackboard). Any
good materials you suggest that are evaluated as important by the instructor/TA and, potentially, fellow
classmates will also earn extra credit. Extra credit will be given in points and added to your individual quiz
grade – boosting that grade’s average. For more information, watch course emails/announcements.

Tardiness: Assignments received less than one week tardy will lose ½ grade; one week and over = full grade.

Posting & Accuracy of Grades: Grades are posted in Blackboard. If you detect a mistake, inform the instructor
immediately. Mistakes happen but they are inadvertent. Do not wait until the last week of the semester to say
“One of my grades is wrong!” It may be too late to resolve the problem then. In other words, watch your grades
in Blackboard to make sure they are accurate and act quickly if you see a problem.

General Class Policies

Attendance: You are expected to come to every class, arrive on time and arrive having done the assigned
material by class time. While this class follows standard FIU policy regarding student absence for sickness,
religious observations, etc., the fact that it utilizes Team-Based Learning (TBL) means that individual
student absences will likely affect not only your individual performance but also your team’s performance.
One effect of absences is that neither individual quizzes (iRATs as explained below) nor team quizzes
(tRATs) will have make-ups. If you or your whole team is absent a day these are given, you will not be
given a make-up and receive a grade of zero. Only students who are absent due to a medical professional’s
substantiated condition (you bring in a doctor’s note) or who are absent for religious observations condoned
by FIU policy, will the instructor exclude the lost grade from your final average for the iRATs. Chronic
absences for tRATs will be reflected in your peers’ evaluations of you. Attendance will be kept by teams.

Please note that if FIU closes due to weather or another reason, the course will pick up where it left off. I
expect, however, that you will access course materials via Blackboard even if the campus is closed so long
as there is power. If possible, I will send you special announcements on the main course webpage in
Blackboard with instructions should such an event take place.

Participation: You must participate in class and in your team. You cannot be a slacker; if you try not only will
your grade reflect this, but your team and individual grades will suffer.

Plagiarism/Academic Honesty: As an FIU student, you are always expected to abide by the university’s policies
particularly those governing academic honesty and plagiarism as they appear in the FIU Student Handbook.
If you are not familiar with how to avoid plagiarism, you will receive some instruction and additional
guidelines in this course. In sum, should anything you/your team produces cite any data, research or
information that you have not generated and which is not general knowledge then you must cite it
appropriately following one of the disciplinary conventions of the academic disciplines represented by the
faculty teaching this course. More information about citation formatting will be given to you via
Blackboard. Please become completely familiar with bibliographic styles and citation conventions. If you
do not cite others’ work adequately you can be accused of plagiarism and FIU takes these accusations very
seriously. Several of your written assignments will be submitted using Turnitin.com to check your work for
plagiarism. Finally, I reserve the right to alter the syllabus as needed. You will be notified of any changes.
**Cell Phones, Computers, etc.** Your cell phones, PDAs, MP3 players, computers, etc. may not be used in class during any assessment (quiz, test). Students caught using electronics during assessments will have their test taken away and will be reported to the FIU authorities for suspected cheating. Other cell phone policies will be debated and announced in class during the first day of the term.

**Special Needs Students:** Please notify the faculty prior to or immediately upon commencement of this course about your accommodation needs as in accordance with FIU policy. You will be accommodated accordingly.

**TEAM DYNAMICS ADMONITION:**
Within teams it is frequently the case that some members perceive themselves as working harder than others. That is not always true, but some will always feel this way and it can build up resentment. So how should this be handled? Any issues that arise must be addressed first *within the team* where all team members can voice concerns. If this does not resolve a problem, the team as a whole or individual team members can meet with the Teaching Assistant who will seek a resolution. If after these steps, the team or individual feels that things are still not working, the team or individual members can consult Dr. Mahler. *ANY SUCH TEAM ISSUE AIRINGS MUST OCCUR BY MID-WAY THROUGH THE COURSE. IF YOU WAIT UNTIL THE END OF THE SEMESTER, NO ACCOMMODATIONS WILL BE MADE.*

Recall that every team member will evaluate all other members of their team at the end of the semester. That means you will also evaluate how much each member of your team contributed to the team overall and to the team’s performance overall. Be mindful of this as you participate in your team. Poor evaluations are given mostly to free- loaders and to those who miss classes. However, even well-intentioned team members who work hard can cause problems in teams if they are too perfectionistic, domineering, etc. Also remind yourself that working in teams for this course can and should be seen as practice for your career life where more often than not you will be working collaboratively.

*Syllabus Caveat:* Please note that the instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus due to need and emergent circumstances. Students will be advised about any change made to the syllabus.