PERSPECTIVES: AN OPEN INTRODUCTION TO CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

SECOND EDITION

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PREFACE

Welcome to *Perspectives* and Open Access Anthropology!

We are delighted to bring to you this novel textbook, a collection of chapters on the essential topics in cultural anthropology. Different from other introductory textbooks, this book is an edited volume with each chapter written by a different author. Each author has written from their experiences working as an anthropologist and that personal touch makes for an accessible introduction to cultural anthropology.

Our approach to cultural anthropology is holistic. We see the interconnectedness of cultural practices and, in all of the chapters, we emphasize the comparison of cultures and the ways of life of different peoples. We start with Laura Nader's observation that cultural differences need not be seen as a problem. In our complicated world of increasing migration, nationalism, and climate challenges, cultural diversity might actually be the source of conflict resolution and new approaches to ensuring a healthier world. Indeed, as Katie Nelson reminds us, anthropology exposes the familiarity in the ideas and practices of others that seem bizarre. Robert Borofsky advocates for anthropology's ability to empower people and facilitate good. Borofsky calls on anthropologists to engage with a wider public to bring our incredible stories and important insights to helping resolve the most critical issues we face in the world today. This book brings Nader, Nelson, Borofsky, and many others together to demonstrate that our anthropological understandings can help all of us to improve the lives of people the world over. We need you, as students, to see the possibilities. As instructors, we want to help you easily share anthropological knowledge and understanding. We want all readers to be inspired by the intensely personal writings of the anthropologists who contribute to this volume.

WHY THIS BOOK?

For students, we promise readable and interesting writing on topics that will be covered in your first year anthropology course. The chapters contain links to support your use and enjoyment of the book. They are designed to help learn the material. Use this book, even if it is not your course text, and then ask your instructor tough questions! Use social media to ask us questions or to send us comments—the details are below.

For instructors, we invite you to build your own book, the perfect book for your course. The available chapters mirror the lecture topics in many first-year courses. The chapters form a whole and they can also stand-alone. Choose the ones you need, assigning some of these chapters and not others. We know that there is some overlap in the chapters. This is a consequence of multiple authors writing about topics which, obviously and necessarily, do not exist without reference to other topics in cultural anthropology. This overlap is teachable because it reinforces the holistic approach used by cultural anthropologists to understand the people with whom we work.

In addition to the chapters, the Perspectives website (http://perspectives.americananthro.org/) provides teaching resources, including a collection of video lectures as well as reflections on the importance of anthropology from well-known members of our discipline. The interviews explain how these

scholars became anthropologists and what they see as the importance and relevance of anthropology today. We hope you will use this textbook with your students, either as a stand-alone text or in conjunction with other textual and digital materials.

Changes in the Second Edition

The core content of the book remains the same in the second edition, but we have made some enhancements in response to feedback from instructors and students.

- New Introductory Chapter
  A new introduction, written by Katie Nelson and Lara Braff, places cultural anthropology in a four-fields context and offers students information about the variety of careers and perspectives in the discipline of anthropology.
- Enhanced E-Book Experience and Pagination
  The book has been reformatted so that the online and electronic versions are easier to read and navigate. The second edition has consistent page numbering in the electronic and print versions.
- Chapter Order
  Because the second edition of the book has grown to 19 chapters, the book has been divided into two parts. Chapters in the first section cover the fundamental topics found in most introductory cultural anthropology courses. *The Development of Anthropological Ideas*, written by Laura Nader, leads the second section, which focuses on in-depth discussion of some of the specialized topics typically covered in cultural anthropology courses. Since the chapters may be read in any combination or order, instructors have a wide range of specialized topics from which to choose to enhance their course.

A Note About The Print Version
A print version of the book is available for purchase through Amazon. The price reflects the cost of the printing itself, which is consistent with the book's Creative Commons non-commercial licensing. All the content in the print version is available free of charge in electronic format from the *Perspectives* website.

ABOUT THE SOCIETY FOR ANTHROPOLOGY IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

This book is produced by the Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges (SACC). SACCers, as we call ourselves, are teaching anthropologists who work in community colleges and universities across North America. We teach first year students—like you—many of whom have never taken an anthropology course. We believe strongly in the importance of learning about cultural diversity and we assert that the ideas and skills of anthropologists can inform work in any career. SACC has been building this book since 2012. We have assembled a terrific writing team of authors who teach in colleges and senior anthropologists who share our commitment to creating an open and accessible textbook. SACC tweets @SACC_L and is on Facebook. We encourage you to tweet at us or post on our Facebook page when you are using this book. SACC is an official section of the American Anthropological Association.

WHY OPEN ACCESS?

This book was motivated by SACC's long-standing interest in supporting a diversity of anthropology students, including first generation college learners and students with lower incomes. Frequently, these are the students we teach. Further, SACCers have an interest in progressive social values and believe in the power of education in anthropology to improve the living conditions and situations of people abroad and at home. We want these messages to find their ways to as many people as possible, even if students aren't formally enrolled in an anthropology course.

This book is published under a creative commons license (CC-BY-NC) which grants permission to instructors to copy, distribute, or remix the chapters to suit your educational needs as long as you credit the original author and the original source of the material. The contents of this book may not be used for commercial purposes, meaning it cannot be sold in any form.

THE COVER DESIGN

We put considerable thought into the cover of Perspectives. We wanted a cover that provokes discussion without stereotyping. We chose a design that prompts reflection and classroom engagement, while remaining friendly and inviting. We invite instructors to use the cover as a teaching tool. Consider discussing that the cover is a story that may be told in many ways. Consider the possibilities of this scene: Who are these people? Where are they in this snapshot and where are they off to? What did they have for breakfast and who will they meet in the course of their day? Similarly, examine this cover along with other recent and past covers of a range of Cultural Anthropology textbooks. What are the messages being sent by the different types of images that represent Cultural Anthropology?

We aren't sure the cover is quite perfect yet, so please teach its strengths and its limitations for understanding what anthropology is—and then let us know what you decide in your class.

Please be in touch with us via social media or email if you have suggestions or questions. If you would like to be involved with this project by writing a chapter or creating ancillary materials, please contact us. The dynamic nature of an open access book means that there is always room to add new chapters or other materials.

Thank you for adopting *Perspectives*.

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