

WRITING INTENSIVE COURSES  
PROPOSAL FORM

Date: Sept. 23, 2004

Faculty Contact: John Wood

Course Number and Name: ANTH 100 – Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Will this course be W-intensive whenever it is offered? No

If not, for which semesters or instructors will it be W-intensive? Fall semesters when taught by Wood

Is this course intended to fulfill any other intensive requirement? No

In narrative form,

*I. Please briefly illustrate how the proposed course is consistent/compatible with the philosophy and guidelines of a writing intensive course.*

*II. Briefly describe the kinds of writing assignments you envision using.*

Proposals, including this coversheet, should be submitted to [Keith Krumpe](#), Chair of the Writing Intensive Subcommittee, and to [Becky Sensabaugh](#), Academic Curriculum Coordinator. Electronic submission as an MS-Word attachment is preferred. Or copies may be mail to:

ILW Subcommittee  
Keith Krumpe, Chair  
RBH 214, CPO #2310

and to:

Becky Sensabaugh  
Academic Curriculum Coordinator  
PH 225, CPO# 1411

*I. Please briefly illustrate how the proposed course is consistent/compatible with the philosophy and guidelines of a writing intensive course.*

The course is an introduction to the discipline of anthropology, and a central topic is writing in the discipline. Students will read classical and current ethnographic texts, which they'll explore not simply for content but also for writing techniques (voice, structure, style, etc). They will learn to write ethnographically—a style which privileges what some have called “thick description” and involves a synthesis of ordinary but rich detail from people’s lives.

*II. Briefly describe the kinds of writing assignments you envision using.*

Writing in anthropology, like other disciplines, is a matter of marrying details, in this case data about particular societies and cultures, with theory and generalities.

But perhaps more than other disciplines in the social sciences, anthropology privileges the individual, the particular, the variable, the marginal—so the point is less to come up with an overarching law or principle than to understand the variety. Anthropological writing works from the particular and anecdotal toward ever more nuanced insights about the general and the whole. It is a delicate balance between the general and the particular.

Towards that end, students will develop their writing on several levels.

We will do frequent small, in-class writing projects that invite them to use details from texts (and later in the semester, from their own field projects) to discover patterns and build insights. They will write in-class at least once every two weeks and more often every week. These will be ten- to fifteen-minute exercises. In half of them, students will share their writing with a partner and discuss what they found effective and perhaps ineffective in the writing. They will be asked in some cases to imitate the voices of anthropologists they have been reading.

In addition, students will write three short fieldwork reports from a field site of their choosing, which they study over the course of the semester. The sites may be on or off campus. The reports will be two- to three-pages long, and each will involve turning in a rough and then a final draft—thus, each paper will require at least one re-write. Reports will be sequenced so that they cover different components of a larger project. In the second two of these projects, papers will also go through a peer review process with other students.

The three shorter reports will serve as the basis of a larger “term paper,” or ethnography. Here again they will turn in rough and final drafts, integrate prior writing with new into a larger whole, and thus work in a sustained fashion on several pieces of related writing to join them into a larger piece of writing. This is the usual way longer pieces of writing are written: as smaller units cobbled into larger ones.

In all, I expect students will write the equivalent of six pages of text in the 10 or 12 in-class exercises, 12 pages of text in the small ethnographic reports, and another 20 to 30 pages in the larger project. The numbers include rough and final drafts. They do not include writing on exams, which will not be rewritten.