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Human Relations Area Files at Yale University

Note to Instructors

This introductory course covers a variety of anthropological themes and aspects of culture. Students are encouraged to debate whether or not cultural universals exist by comparing and contrasting ethnographic examples from around the world. Assignments include a group project and essay.

The materials for each week have been curated with quality, scope, diversity and ease of access in mind (see below). The weekly discussion topics (“key readings”) focus on engaging articles from the HRAF homepage. These articles offer cross-cultural insight on fundamental anthropological themes supported by ethnographic examples sourced from the eHRAF databases. In addition, each week is supported by one or more videos or mini-lecture for in-class or at-home viewing. Textbook chapters and optional advanced ethnographic or theoretical readings are also provided, allowing for some flexibility across different class levels at the discretion of the instructor.

Where possible, links to relevant documents within [eHRAF World Cultures](#) are indicated. Note that eHRAF database membership is required for full paragraph-level access to documents. The writing assignment similarly requires that students conduct research within eHRAF World Cultures. One week of this syllabus is therefore dedicated to an eHRAF Workshop for teaching students how to search the databases for ethnographic sources to support their essays. Instructors unfamiliar with eHRAF may be interested in learning more about teaching research skills with the eHRAF Databases in a [webinar](#) and/or [free trial](#).

Built for online learning

For faculty currently seeking online learning resources for transitioning from traditional classroom teaching to digital environments, this syllabus and its exercises have been formatted for easy adoption via remote platforms. It has been adapted in light of campus shutdowns in March 2020 to prioritize digital resources over physical books. The required videos and articles for each week are all freely available online. A small number of the optional “advanced readings” may have a paywall where noted.

An extended “companion” reading list with texts is offered below should instructors or students have access to the texts now or in the future. These traditional textbooks, monographs, and journal articles are listed as supplementary reading. Again, links to digital versions of texts available in eHRAF are provided where applicable. Instructors can choose to assign these should students have access to them.

For more about adapting coursework for online learning conditions, see:

[Remote futures: tips for online teaching and learning in anthropology](#)