ANTH 70A
Business, Culture and Society
Spring 2014
T, F: 9:30AM – 10:50AM
Lecturer: Mrinalini Tankha
Email: mtankha@brandeis.edu
Office Hours: T, F: 11:30AM – 12:30PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why is it important for business practitioners to understand culture? What impact do different cultural values and preferences have on the success or failure of businesses? How do you study culture? What kinds of strategies can firms adopt to make their businesses more suitable to the various socio-cultural contexts in which they operate?

The course will address these questions by drawing on new directions in the field of applied business anthropology and will look at the cultural dimensions of international business. With a diverse and rapidly changing global marketplace, it is becoming crucial to consider the ways local traditions and customs influence business products, services, clients and ideas. In the course, we question common-sense understandings of culture by focusing on the links between individual interactions and broader structures, particularly the market. We will explore in cross-cultural perspective, how different social values and preferences such as community networks, religious beliefs, kinship, and ideas of morality affect and are also affected by business practices.

The course will also discuss anthropological methods of studying culture that focus on qualitative data collection and analysis. Ethnographic research methods consisting of participant observation, structured and informal interviews are now increasingly popular in aiding corporations to develop culturally appropriate ways of doing business with suppliers, business partners, and customers. We will consider the merits and constraints of these methods in explaining patterns of behavior and their role in improving business strategies and operations.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Attendance (only 2 unexcused absences allowed) = 10%
2. Class Participation (In-class and LATTE postings) = 20%
3. Two Short Papers (6-7 pages each) – 20% x 2 = 40%
4. Final Group Projects = 30%

Class Participation:
- The class will be divided into two sections. Each section will post reading responses (500 words) on LATTE every alternate week.
- There will be several small group exercises with different case studies in which every student will have to present and discuss ideas.

Final Group Projects:
- Students will make posters and present to the class an original business idea taking into account the concepts learned over the semester and using ethnographic methods. Each group will respond to questions about their posters and business idea. (20% of grade)
- Each student will write an Individual 3-page Report about the relevance of their group’s business idea as well as the methods and processes employed in generating the outcome. (10% of grade)

BOOKS


All other readings will be available on LATTE

*If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me in the FIRST WEEK of class.*
SYLLABUS

WEEK I – INTRODUCTION TO BUSINESS ANTHROPOLOGY (1/14, 1/17)

January 14 – Introduction

January 17 – What is Business Anthropology?

WEEK II – BUSINESS ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS (1/21, 1/24)

January 21 – Relevance of Business Anthropology

January 24 – Business and Ethnographic Methods

FILM: Beyond Ethnography: Corporate & Design Anthropology (AAA)
WEEK III – CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND MANAGEMENT (1/27, 1/31)

GROUP A - RESPONSE PAPERS DUE

January 27 – Case Study: Japan


January 31 - Case Study: Japan Contd.


WEEK IV – CORPORATE CULTURE AND INFLUENCE (2/4, 2/7)

February 4 – The Corporate Personality

**FILM: The Corporation**

February 7 – Corporate Culture and Management


WEEK V – CORPORATE CULTURE AND INFLUENCE CONTD. (2/11, 2/14)

GROUP B - RESPONSE PAPERS DUE

February 11 – Case Study: Bang & Olufsen, Denmark

February 14 – Case Study: Bang & Olufsen, Denmark


WEEK VI – 2/18, 2/21

NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

WEEK VII – GLOBAL BUSINESS, GENDER AND IDENTITY (2/25, 2/28)

GROUP A – RESPONSE PAPERS DUE

February 25 – Case Study: ‘Informatics’ in Barbados


February 28 - Case Study: ‘Informatics’ in Barbados Contd.


[PAPER #1 DUE – MARCH 2nd at 11:59PM]

WEEK VIII – ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION (3/4, 3/7)

GROUP B – RESPONSE PAPERS DUE

March 4 – Entrepreneurship and Social Networks


March 7 – Case Study: *Jugaad* in India


**WEEK IX – PRODUCT DESIGN AND BRANDING (3/11, 3/14)**

**GROUP A – RESPONSE PAPER DUE**

March 11 – Design is Political


March 14 – Branding Case Study: Coca Cola


**WEEK X – MARKETING AND ADVERTIZING (3/18, 3/21)**

**GROUP B – RESPONSE PAPER DUE**

March 18 – The Structure of Advertisements


**Film: Advertising Missionaries**

**March 21 – Race and Ethnicity**


**WEEK XI - CULTURES OF CONSUMPTION (3/25, 3/28)**

**GROUP A – RESPONSE PAPER DUE**

**March 25 and 28 – Ethical Consumption**


- Wilk, Richard. Green Consumerism is No Solution
  [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/american-anthropological-association/green-consumerism-is-no-solution_b_3437457.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/american-anthropological-association/green-consumerism-is-no-solution_b_3437457.html)

**WEEK XII – CORPORATE PHILANTHROPY, ACTIVISM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (4/1, 4/4)**

**GROUP B – RESPONSE PAPER DUE**

**April 1 – Corporate Philanthropy and Activism**

**Guest Speaker:** Mr. Alan Hassenfeld, Former Chairman and CEO of Hasbro Toys and current Board Member of the Hasbro Charitable Trust and the Hasbro Children’s Foundation


- Hasbro Readings (Latte)
April 4 – Mining and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)


**WEEK XIII – CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CONTD. (4/8, 4/11)**

April 8 – CSR and Sustainable/Green Business

*Guest Speaker: Dr. Zahir Dossa, Founder and President of The Argan Tree and Argania Gourmet*

- Dossa, Zahir and Francisco Szekely. “Redefining Value Creation in Value Chains: The Social Side of Sustainability” (DRAFT- Do Not Circulate)

April 11 – Mining and Corporate Social Responsibility contd.


*[PAPER #2 DUE – APRIL 13th at 11:59PM]*

**WEEK XIV – (4/15, 4/18)**

**NO CLASS - PASSOVER BREAK**

**WEEK XV – POSTER PRESENTATIONS (4/25)**

April 22 – No Class (Passover Break Contd.)

April 25 – Final Presentations

**WEEK XVI – POSTER PRESENTATIONS (4/29)**

April 29 – Final Presentations Contd. (Last Day of Class)