

Syllabus

Preparation for Practice and the Applied Thesis

ANTH 5050 On-Campus | Dr. Christina Wasson | University of North Texas
Spring 2024 | M 6-8:50pm | Anth Dept Conference Room

Course Description

Applied anthropologists work in many kinds of settings and take on a range of different roles. In this course, students will explore some of this diversity by interacting with guest speakers and reading case studies. In the process, they will identify an applied thesis project, if they have not already done so. Students will also receive training in the professional aspects of applied anthropology, such as client development and project design. They will learn how to market their skills and how to develop the entrepreneurial mindset that success in applied anthropology requires.

Course Prerequisites

None

Course Objectives

This course has three overall goals:

1. Helping students plan their applied thesis
2. Contributing to students' professional development
3. Bringing students into the community of practice of applied/practicing anthropologists.

With regard to the applied thesis, upon successful completion of this course, students will have learned how to:

- Develop a vision and plan for the thesis project
- Find an applied thesis site
- Successfully build a relationship with a client/community partner
- Develop a solid research design that answers the client's/community partner's questions within the student's resource constraints
- Write the applied thesis proposal
- Conduct the applied thesis project

With regard to professional development, upon successful completion of this course, students will have learned how to:

- Conduct an informational interview
- Apply for jobs that use their skills, and market themselves to potential employers
- Be successful on the job, including the importance of being both entrepreneurial and a team player

With regard to bringing students into the community of practice of applied/practicing anthropologists, upon successful completion of this course, students will have developed expertise about:

- The main professional organizations in applied anthropology
- How to attend conferences
- How to do networking
- Contested issues in the field of applied anthropology
- Ethical issues in applied work
- Multiple varieties of applied/practicing anthropology
- The cultural logics of practitioners
- Typical career trajectories of practitioners
- And students will have interacted with quite a few applied anthropologists.

These objectives will be accomplished through a variety of activities: visits from guest speakers, class lectures, class discussions, readings, handouts, informational interviews, and other assignments. Actively participating in these activities is the path for students to achieve the course objectives.

Instructor Contact Information

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Communication Expectations: You are welcome to communicate with me at any time via phone or email. I will normally respond within 24 hours. I post grades within a week of assignment submission.

Online Course Resources

- Various course materials are available on the [ANTH 5050 page](#) of my professional website.
- Other course materials are stored on [Canvas](#), including the syllabus and links to readings.

Required Texts

The readings in this course come from two sources:

1. A book that is available at the UNT bookstore:
Nolan, Riall W. 2003. *Anthropology in practice: building a career outside the academy*.
Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers. ISBN 1-55587-985-3 (paperback).
2. Articles that can be accessed through links on Canvas.

Course Requirements

1. **Participation in classroom discussions (25% / 250 points).** As a graduate seminar, participation is very important in this course. Your participation grade will be based on the following elements:

- Do you demonstrate that you have completed the assigned readings
- Do you offer thoughtful analyses, reflections, and critiques of the topics discussed in class
- Do your comments build on the comments of other class members
- Are you usually present in class (if you have more than one unexcused absence, your grade will go down)

You are responsible for all materials and announcements presented in class, whether or not you were there. If you miss a day, your first step should be to ask a classmate for their notes. If you have questions after that, you are welcome to ask me.

2. **A series of assignments related to your applied thesis (adding up to 75% / 750 points).** Here is a list of the assignments and how they are weighted. Instructions for each item are provided at the end of the syllabus.

Assignment	% of Course Grade	Points
Field of Interest Paper	5	50
Organizations List	10	100
Interview Summary #1	10	100
Project Statement	10	100
Resume	10	100
Interview Summary #2	10	100
Proposal	20	200

Grading

I am used to grading on an A/B/etc. system, and translating A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, etc. However, the gradebook in Canvas requires me to use a point system. The table below shows how I have translated one system to the other.

Letter Grade	Traditional Numerical Scale	50 Points (Traditional x 12.5)	100 Points (Traditional x 25)	200 Points (Traditional x 50)
A	4	50	100	200
A-	3.7	46	93	185
B+	3.3	41	83	165
B	3	38	75	150
B-	2.7	34	68	135
C+	2.3	29	58	115
C	2	25	50	100

C-	1.7	21	43	85
D+	1.3	16	33	65
D	1	13	25	50
D-	0.7	9	18	35
F	0	0	0	0

An A on all assignments will result in a final score of 1000. A final score of 875-1000 (3.5-4.0 on a traditional scale) will result in an A in the course. A final score of 625-874 will result in a B in the course. According to UNT policy, final grades do not have pluses or minuses.

UNT Policies

Academic Integrity Policy

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

ADA Policy

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the [ODA website](#).

Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Schedule for the Semester

Note: We will have a series of guest speakers. This will cause the readings and topics to move around depending on when the speakers get scheduled.

Students are expected to complete each day's assigned readings before class.

The readings are identified by author's last name and year; for full information, see the final section of the syllabus.

	Topic	Assignments Due	Readings
WEEK 1 Jan 15	NO CLASS – MLK HOLIDAY		
WEEK 2 Jan 22	Introduction and Course Objectives		Lave and Wenger 1991a Lave and Wenger 1991b
WEEK 3 Jan 29	Applied Anthropology as Community of Practice		Wasson 2006 Nolan Ch. 1
WEEK 4 Feb 5	Finding Applied Thesis Site; Career Planning; Informational Interviews	Field of Interest Paper	Nolan Ch. 2 (skip "Choosing a Graduate School" 38-49) Nolan Ch. 3
WEEK 5 Feb 12	Public Anthropology; Practitioner Case Study; Applied Thesis Planning		Borofsky 2000 Singer 2000 Butler 2006
WEEK 6 Feb 19	Client Development + Designing the Project; Writing a Project Statement	Organizations List	Block 1981a, 1981b, 1981c
WEEK 7 Feb 26	Finding a Job; Practitioner Case Study		Nolan Ch. 4 Copeland-Carson 2006
WEEK 8 Mar 4	Surviving at Work; Practitioner Case Study	Project Statement	Nolan Ch. 5 Pinsker 2006
SPRING BREAK Mar 11			
WEEK 9 Mar 18	Advancing the Profession; Consulting		Nolan Ch. 6 Crain and Tashima 2013
WEEK 10 Mar 25	NO CLASS – SFAA	Interview Summary #1	
WEEK 11 Apr 1	Practitioner Case Study; Ethics of Studying Up		Trotter 1987 Forsythe 1999
WEEK 12 Apr 8	Practitioner Case Studies; Writing the Proposal	Resume or Proposal	Sunderland and Denny 2003 Wasson and Squires 2012
WEEK 13 Apr 15	Practitioner Case Studies		Esber 1987 Fiske 2012
WEEK 14 Apr 22	Doing the Applied Thesis; Practitioner Case Studies	Interview Summary #2	Applied Thesis Proposal Koons 2013 Partridge 2013
WEEK 15 Apr 29	Review and Wrap-Up		N/A
FINALS May 6	N/A	Proposal or Resume	N/A

Instructions for Assignments

1. Field of Interest Paper

Write an essay about your field of interest, be it public health, refugees, organizational change, or whatever.

First of all, be as specific as you can about your interests. What is it about this field that draws you to it? Do you have previous experience in this area? What kind of organization might you work in, for your applied thesis and, later on, for your career (if relevant)?

Secondly, describe important issues or problems that organizations in this field are currently dealing with. Be as specific as you can. If you want, you can focus on the situation in a particular community or agency. If you are not that familiar with your field of interest, do some library/web research to identify current issues. How can an applied anthropologist help with these issues?

The essay should be about 5 pages, double-spaced, with page numbers.

2. Organizations List

Prepare a list of 5 organizations that could be potential sites/clients for your applied thesis. For each organization, include ALL of the following information:

- Name of organization
- Address of organization
- Website of organization
- Name, job title, department, phone number, and email address of at least one contact person who might be able to sponsor your applied thesis (i.e., not the receptionist)
- Brief explanation of how you found out about the organization/contact person
- Brief explanation of what the organization does
- How the organization relates to your research interests and possible thesis ideas

3. Project Statement

Design a one-page summary of your desired applied thesis for potential clients. You may not go over one page but you can be creative with fonts, line spacing, and so forth. Make the page visually appealing, so potential clients will want to read it through. You will learn more about how to design a project statement in class, before the assignment is due. The point of the statement is to have something to hand organizations when you approach them, that tells them what you want to do and how they will benefit. The most common mistake students make with this assignment is to focus too much on themselves and not enough on what they can do for the client.

4. Interview Summary #1

In order to complete this assignment, you must first conduct an informational interview. This is an opportunity for you to start to build your network in your areas of interest, to learn more about possible career directions, and to get advice about your applied thesis project. You will learn how to do an informational interview in class.

Do not choose someone you already know well – the point is to expand your network. Do not conduct the interview using email. It should be face-to-face or by phone or Skype. Do not interview a professor unless that is your career goal, or unless you have prior approval from me.

Write a summary of what you learned in the informational interview. Start by explaining why you chose that person – how do they relate to your research interests and career goals? Then, write about what you learned in the interview. What did you discover about the person's field of work? What did you especially like/dislike/find exciting/find boring? What advice did you get on setting up your applied thesis?

The summary should be about 3-4 pages, double-spaced.

Note: Start planning your interviews many weeks before the assignments are due, because it can take a surprisingly long time to set them up. Expect that you may have to put a fair amount of effort into finding a good person to interview. Coordinating schedules can take weeks too; many of these people are very busy.

5. Resume

Prepare a resume based on Nolan Ch. 4 and class discussions. The audience for the resume should be your potential applied thesis sites.

6. Interview Summary #2

Same instructions as Interview Summary #1.

As an alternative, you can proceed to actually contacting organizations about your applied thesis and setting up interviews. In that case, write about your initial applied thesis-seeking meeting(s).

7. Proposal

The proposal may be either somewhat hypothetical or the one you will actually put to use. Even if you are not ready to start your applied thesis, writing out a hypothetical proposal will provide you with a strong foundation for the final version.

The proposal format should follow the guidelines established by the department. They can be accessed on the website for this course. You will learn more about how to write a proposal in class.

Full References for Readings Linked on Canvas

- Block, Peter. 1981a. Chapter 2: Techniques are Not Enough. In *Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 13-36.
- Block, Peter. 1981b. Chapter 4: Contracting Overview. In *Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 53-68.
- Block, Peter. 1981c. Chapter 5: The Contracting Meeting. In *Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 69-106.
- Borofsky, Robert. 2000. Public Anthropology. Where To? What Next? *Anthropology News* 41(5):9-10.
- Butler, Mary Odell. 2006. Random Walk. *NAPA Bulletin* 26:20-31.
- Copeland-Carson, Jacqueline. 2006. Seeing Double: An Anthropologist's Vision Quest. *NAPA Bulletin* 26:55-81.
- Crain, Cathleen and Nathaniel Tashima. 2013. An Anthropologically Based Consulting Firm. In *A Handbook of Practicing Anthropology*, ed. Riall W. Nolan. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 125-136.
- Esber, George S. 1987. Designing Apache Homes with Apaches. In *Anthropological Praxis: Translating Knowledge into Action*, ed. Robert M. Wulff and Shirley J. Fiske. Boulder: Westview Press, 187-196.
- Fiske, Shirley. 2012. Global Climate Change from the Bottom Up. In *Applying Anthropology in the Global Village*, ed. Christina Wasson, Mary Odell Butler and Jacqueline Copeland-Carson. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 143-172.
- Forsythe, Diana E. 1999. Ethics and Politics of Studying Up in Technoscience. *Anthropology of Work Review* 20(1):6-11.
- Koons, Adam, 2013. Nongovernmental Organizations. In *A Handbook of Practicing Anthropology*, ed. Riall W. Nolan. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 137-149.
- Lave, Jean and Etienne Wenger. 1991a. Legitimate Peripheral Participation. In *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 27-43.

- Lave, Jean and Etienne Wenger. 1991b. Midwives, Tailors, Quartermasters, Butchers, Nondrinking Alcoholics. In *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 59-87.
- Partridge, William L. 2013. Multilateral Governmental Organizations. In *A Handbook of Practicing Anthropology*, ed. Riall W. Nolan. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 150-160.
- Pinsker, Eve C. 2006. Theory and Practice: Improvising Life as a Practicing Anthropologist. *NAPA Bulletin* 26:135-151.
- Singer, Merrill. 2000. Why I am Not a Public Anthropologist. *Anthropology News* 41(6):6-7.
- Sunderland, Patricia and Rita Denny. 2003. Psychology vs Anthropology: Where is Culture in Marketplace Ethnography? In *Advertising Cultures*, ed. Timothy deWaal Malefyt and Brian Moeran. Oxford: Berg, 187-202.
- Trotter, Robert T. 1987. A Case of Lead Poisoning from Folk Remedies in Mexican American Communities. In *Anthropological Praxis: Translating Knowledge into Action*, ed. Robert M. Wulff and Shirley J. Fiske. Boulder: Westview Press, 146-159.
- Wasson, Christina. 2006. Making History at the Frontier. *NAPA Bulletin* 26:1-19.
- Wasson, Christina and Susan Squires. 2012. Localizing the Global in Technology Design. In *Applying Anthropology in the Global Village*, ed. Christina Wasson, Mary Odell Butler and Jacqueline Copeland-Carson. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 251-284.