

# **Culture and Business**

## **ANT 2510/UGEC2662 (Fall Semester 2020)**

Instructor: Avron Boretz [boretz@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:boretz@cuhk.edu.hk) NAH 411  
TA: TBA  
Lecture: Tuesdays 11:30AM-1:15PM  
Tutorials: (1) Tuesdays 1:30-2:15  
(2) Time TBA

In this course, we consider the current practice and historical development of modern, global business from an anthropological perspective. Business and management practices are diverse, influenced by cultural differences but also shapers of culture. We examine “business culture”—the beliefs and behaviors that emerge from the way organizations are structured and experienced; the “culture of business”—the ways businesses and corporations influence our values and orientations; and the “business of culture”—how marketing, branding, and advertising assimilate culture and consumption. We also examine the interaction of business and culture locally (Hong Kong) and regionally (Asia generally and China specifically).

Anthropology, the comparative study of culture and society, helps us to understand different forms of management and organization. We focus on the importance of culture in the formation of business practice, and aim to make sense of the diversity of business and management practices between cultures; and introduce the research techniques and analytical tools of business ethnography, providing an opportunity to learn and apply basic ethnographic skills to real-world business problems.

### **Readings:**

All readings and media are available to view or download from the CU Blackboard page for this course. You should finish the listed assignment (whether readings or other media) **before** each week’s lecture.

You are required to write a brief summary of each week’s assigned readings. The summary should be between 100 and 200 words (for your reference, the 2-paragraph course description above is 170 words). Submit via Blackboard before the beginning of each week’s lecture.

### **Course Requirements and Evaluation:**

Weekly reading summary: 20%  
Midterm Essay: 35%  
Final Project: 45%

**You are responsible for submitting all assignments, including the Midterm and Final, on or before the published deadlines.**

## GRADE DESCRIPTORS

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Criteria for 1) the course and 2) for coursework</i>
A	<p>Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.</p> <p>The work has creatively synthesized course materials and key ideas in an original way. The argument is logical and cohesive, the discussion is well-organized, and the writing is clear. Concrete evidence corresponds to statements and claims.</p>
A-	<p>Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.</p> <p>The work synthesizes course materials and key ideas in an original way, but there are areas for improvement.</p>
B-range	<p>Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.</p> <p>The work demonstrates a solid grasp of course materials and key ideas. There are areas for improvement with respect to building a cohesive argument, organizing the discussion, communicating clearly, and/or identifying relevant evidence.</p>
C-range	<p>Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.</p> <p>The work shows some effort, but course materials have not been sufficiently engaged. The argument and the writing is not clear, and/or there is no evidence for statements and claims made.</p>
D-range	<p>Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.</p> <p>The work shows little effort to engage course materials. There are major problems with clarity of argument and writing.</p>
F	<p>Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.</p> <p>The work has failed to respond to the assignment prompts.</p>

# Class Schedule

## 1. September 8: Course Introduction

Lecture: Why Culture?

*No tutorial meeting.*

## 2. September 15: Business Paradigms, Then and Now

The Boston Consulting Group, "Smart Design for Performance: A New Approach to Organization Design"

David McCurdy "Using Anthropology." In James Spradley and David McCurdy, eds. 2003 *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology* (11<sup>th</sup> ed.), pp. 415-427. Also in Ferraro, Gary P., ed. *Applying Cultural Anthropology: Readings* pp. 66-72.

## 3. September 22: Cross-cultural Communication I

Jordan 2003 Chapter 2 "Techniques for Conducting Fieldwork for Business Organizations"

Tannen, Debora "Conversation Style: Talking on the Job." In James Spradley and David McCurdy, eds. *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.), pp. 70-78.

## 4. September 29: Cross-cultural Communication II

Jordan 2003 Chapter 3 "Seeing Cultural Groupings."

Schneider, Fred 1998 "Scattering Bones Along the Banquet Trail" in *Getting Along with the Chinese for Fun and Profit* (pp. 81-97).

## 5. October 6: Dimensions of National Cultural Difference I: Rules vs Relationships, Group vs Individual

Trompenaars Chapters 4-5 (pp.29-68)

## 6. October 13: Dimensions of National Cultural Difference II: Emotions Expressed, Range of Involvement, and How Status is Accorded

Trompenaars Chapters 6-9 (pp. 69-118); also pp. 179-181.

## 7. October 20: Corporatization

Ritzer, George 2000 "An Introduction to McDonalidization" pp. 1-20 in *The McDonalidization of Society*

**Midterm Essay Questions will be announced in class and posted on the Blackboard page.**

**Midterm Essay Due Sunday, October 25, 11:59PM (submit via Blackboard)**

### **8. October 27: Traditional Entrepreneurship and Social Entrepreneurship**

For Lecture: Tan Chee Beng, "Culture and Economic Performance with Special Reference to the Chinese in Southeast Asia" (Read through the top of the page numbered 199; the rest is optional)

For Tutorial: Explore the websites of Social Ventures Hong Kong ([www.sv-hk.org](http://www.sv-hk.org)) and Deloitte Pioneers ([www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/about-deloitte-uk/articles/alumni-pioneers.html](http://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/about-deloitte-uk/articles/alumni-pioneers.html))

### **9. November 3: Globalization and Complexity**

Bestor, Theodore C. "How Sushi Went Global." In Spradley and McCurdy, *Conformity and Conflict* 11<sup>th</sup> edition (2003), pp. 201-211. Orig. in *Foreign Policy* no. 121 (2000).

Davidson, Adam, "Welcome to the Failure Age!" *The New York Times*, Nov. 12, 2014

Optional: Jordan 2003 Chapter 8 "Understanding Issues of Globalization."

### **10. November 10: Branding and Advertising**

Readings TBA (Moeran)

Media Links TBA

### **11. November 17: Anthropology of Business, Anthropology for Business**

Readings TBA

### **12. November 24: The "Science" of Shopping**

Underhill, Paco 1999 "Instead of Samoa, Stores: The Science of Shopping" In *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping*, pp. 11-39.

Jordan 2003 Chapter 5 "Marketing and Consumer Behavior."

### **13. December 1: Course Recap plus Final Project Q&A**

**Final Essay Topic will be announced and posted to the course Blackboard page**

**Final Essay Due Tuesday December 22 @9:00PM (submit via Blackboard)**