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## Anthropology on the go:

# Teaching multiculturalism at a commuter college

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*Adapted from a paper presented at the 93rd Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Atlanta, November, 1994. Additional data and course information available from authors.*

There has been a national emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism in the United States that has pervaded the educational system. Colleges are responding to the need to inform their students about varied ideas, values, and attitudes. At Kennesaw State College, students are offered this opportunity through anthropology.

Because the ethnic composition of Kennesaw's student body largely mirrors the demographics of this area, many white students have not had the opportunity to interact with other racial and ethnic groups and many students have not been exposed to different viewpoints about the world. This lack of interaction and experience has been a concern of the college and this is where the discipline of anthropology attempts to make a difference.

Anthropology 105, Contemporary Issues in Cultural Anthropology, was developed by Betty Smith as the core course in which contemporary issues in anthropology are explored. The goals of the course are to foster:

1. an understanding of the discipline of anthropology with an emphasis on cultural anthropology and anthropological research methods;
2. an understanding of contemporary social issues from an anthropological perspective;
3. a global perspective and an appreciation of cultural diversity;
4. an understanding of the connections among academic disciplines, especially, but not limited to, the other social sciences.

The subjects introduced in Anthropology 105 cover a broad

range of topics. In all matters, a connection between the topic and the student's life is essential for the student to appreciate the relevance and applicability of anthropological work. Class lectures, films, and discussions complement the articles in the text developed by Smith and Van Horne for the course.

An introduction to the field of anthropology is necessary since, for many of the students, this course is their first exposure to the discipline. Discussion of what sets anthropology apart from other social sciences and how it is related to them is an important early component of the course.

One of the most important topics in Anthropology 105 is race and ethnicity. The biological and social definitions of race are discussed and their realities in day-to-day life are illustrated. Students are taught to view biological characteristics as the outcome of evolutionary processes working on the human species.

Marriage is seen as a cross-cultural regularity, with the highlight of American marriage as an expression of individuality and the concomitant problems this perspective brings. Gender and child socialization are discussed in a cross-cultural perspective in the section of the course entitled "Raising Children."

Population problems are put in a global context when the course turns to the topic of "Health, Poverty, and Population." For example, students learn about the power of religion on population control in countries such as Brazil.

The consequences of environmental degradation, such as the sustainability of the land and the road to poverty, are brought out with concrete examples from many parts of the world, including the United States.

### Studying Results

These topics give a broad sampling of the issues raised in the course "Contemporary Issues in Cultural Anthropology." In order to test the effectiveness of the course in meeting its goals, two surveys designed by psychology professor Michael Reiner were conducted during the Fall Quarter of 1993 to measure student attitudes. A total of 180 students in five sections of Anthropology 105 participated in the study.

The first survey, or pretest, was distributed during the initial class meeting, before discussion of the course ensued and before the students received a syllabus outlining the course content. The second survey, or post-test, was administered after the final exam. Both multiple choice and open-ended questions were asked. Reported here are the results of the multiple choice section.

General questions were asked of the students about their knowledge of the subject of anthropology, their familiarity with cultural issues, racial issues, and gender issues, and their knowledge of international perspectives. The pretest results indicate that nearly two-thirds of the students reported that they were not at all or only a little familiar with the subject of anthropology. Post-test data show a striking contrast to pretest data. Nearly two-thirds of respondents indicated that, after taking the

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course, they were either very familiar or familiar with the subject of anthropology. Written unquantified evaluations indicated that the students enjoyed the course in addition to learning something.

About half the students identified themselves as being somewhat knowledgeable about cultural issues before they were exposed to the course; however, after the course had been completed, over three-quarters of the students reported that they were extremely or very knowledgeable about such matters. Likewise, similar results were obtained for the pre- and post-test question on racial issues. One in five students admitted to being a little or not at all familiar with racial issues in the pretest; however, this dropped to a negligible 1 % for the post-test.

The outcome of the survey on gender issues shows that almost 1 in 3 students professed to be extremely or very knowledgeable about this topic before class-

room instruction, with more than a doubling of students with such degrees of knowledge after.

An international perspective was familiar to over half of the students as reported in the pretest, with this figure jumping to nearly the entire sample of students, who reported to be either extremely, very, or somewhat familiar with such a perspective.

### Conclusions

Overall, the pretest survey reveals that most students come into the classroom with a somewhat limited knowledge of anthropology and the contemporary issues which cultural anthropologists face. These issues are portrayed as crucial to students' lives. In generalizing the post-test survey, we can state with confidence that anthropology has had an impact on the students at KSC and has heightened their awareness of cultural issues, racial issues, gender issues, and international perspec-

tives. What is left for the students is to carry these thoughts with them as they leave the classroom and apply their newly-found knowledge in all aspects of their lives.

### Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Michael Reiner (Associate Professor of Psychology, KSC) who designed the pre- and post-course surveys and his students Tia McKnight and Clayton Small, who aided in compiling the data.

We would also like to thank Dr. Wayne Van Horne (Assistant Professor of Anthropology, KSC), who administered the surveys to two sections of Anth 105, and who is co-author of the textbook used for the course. Ultimately, we are grateful to the 180 students of Anthropology 105 who willingly cooperated with our research efforts.

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## The Internet and the Professor: A Mini-Guide

Dawn Rodrigues and Robert Barrier, English Department

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### WHAT SHOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT THE INTERNET?

At Kennesaw State College, most faculty have the Internet accessible from their desktop computer. We've been focusing on exploring ways of using e-mail and gopher capabilities in the Writing Center, so we've done more than the average amount of exploring. We thought we'd share some of what we've learned.

But first, let us review some Internet Basics.

### INTERNET BASICS

**1. Is e-mail the same as the Internet?** If you have an e-mail address, then you're on the Internet. KSC is part of Peachnet, a linked set of Georgia Internet sites. Your e-mail address identifies your school location.

**2. How do I join a listserv?** Listserv groups—

often called mailing lists or "lists" —are ways that groups interested in the same topic can carry on a discussion through e-mail. If you subscribe to a "list," you can easily send messages to the entire group and reply by writing to the list address rather than writing to each person individually. To subscribe to a list:

1. Send an e-mail message to the listserv address: listserv@[address]; e.g. listserv@uga.cc.uga.edu
2. In the first line of the message, type the following: subscribe [name of list] [your name] e.g. subscribe K-16link Dawn Rodrigues

There are hundreds of lists in the academic disciplines. The best way to learn quickly about listservs in your discipline is to look at Resources by Subject on the KSC Gopher, find maillists, discussion groups, or e-lists, and read the short purpose statement and subscription information of interesting sounding lists. To access one of the best resources on the Internet, follow this procedure:

1. From the KSC Gopher Root Menu (first screen), key down to "General Information Services."