Princeton University  
Department of Anthropology

Prof. Rena Lederman  
Office: 100D Aaron Burr  
Lederman@princeton.edu  
Phone: x85534

Pacific Islanders: Histories, Cultures, and Change  
This course concerns Pacific Islanders: their histories from first settlement through colonial rule, their diverse cultures, and their experience of sociocultural transformation in recent times. Throughout the semester, we will also use Pacific ethnography for the light it sheds on general questions concerning cultural difference, inequality, and interpretation/translation.

Available for purchase at Micawber’s:  
L. Foerstel and A. Gilliam, eds. Confronting the Margaret Mead Legacy  
R. Keesing Custom and Confrontation  
S. Lindenbaum Kuru Sorcery  
M. Sahlins Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities  
E. Schieffelin and R. Crittenden, eds. Like People You See in a Dream

Available at Pequod: Course packet (all readings not included in the books above)  
Available at Firestone: All course readings are on reserve, including the assigned ethnographies, a copy of an earlier year’s course packet (entitled Pacific Islanders), xeroxes of all the article readings, and the books from which some of the articles are drawn.

Requirements:  
1. Informed class participation: You will be expected to complete the readings on time, and to come to class ready for discussion. Confusions, questions, criticisms and enthusiasms are all welcome. To prepare for discussion, think about the main points of each of the assigned readings and about how they relate to one another. Develop one or two points or questions to contribute during class.  
2. Oral class presentations: students will make a short (5 minute) presentation due on dates to be arranged (see “Assignments” appendix to this syllabus).  
3. Papers: a 5 pp. discussion of readings relating to your oral presentation is due a week after you make your presentation; a 3 pp. proposal for your final paper is due Wednesday, March 28 (no extensions); and a 13-15 pp. essay is due on “Dean’s Date” (Tuesday, May 15) at 4 p.m. See “Assignments” appendix to this syllabus for details).
Discussion Topics and Reading Assignments

The issues and questions introducing each “topic” below are meant to provide you with an initial sense of the relevance of that group of readings to our on-going class discussions. However, they aren’t meant to constrain you: please develop further connections and questions of your own, whether complementary or critical. Notice that, while “topic” descriptions focus your attention on one set of issues, readings within each “topic” also illustrate other “topics”. Also notice that our authors don’t always agree with one another! Weekly reading assignments are all required and are listed in their recommended reading order; note, however, that the one listed last is by no means the least important! All article readings can be found in the course packet; additionally, they are on reserve under their own titles and/or under the name of a book from which they were drawn. Book readings are indicated in boldface.

HISTORICAL (DIS)ORIENTATIONS

Introduction (Mon, Feb 5)
Discussion of format and assignments, and organization of class presentations. Course overview and preview of Topic 1.

Topic 1: “First contact”: the cultural politics of perspective (Feb 7, 12, 14, 19)
We’ll compare representations (“theirs”, “ours”) of intercultural contact in the context of European exploration and colonization in order to start thinking about the politics of intercultural (mis)communication. These comparisons will also enable us to think about our assumptions concerning why and how cultures change, and to contrast Western ideas about cultural difference and relations with alternative Pacific Islander ideas about such things. Among the points to grasp: that no culture is an “island” (least of all in the Pacific!) and that “firsts” are relative. The question to consider: Relative to what?

Reading (due Weds, Feb 7):
1. J. Hides (1936) *Papuan Wonderland*, Chapter 10 (xerox) and begin reading *Schieffelin and Crittenden*, below, for more on Hides
2. C. Lutz and J. Collins (1993) “Fashions in the ethnic other” (xerox; Lutz and Collins *Reading National Geographic*, Chapter 5)
Reading (due Mon, Feb 12):
1. E. Schieffelin and R. Crittenden, eds. (1991) *Like People You See in a Dream*
2. F. Bugotu “The impact of western culture on a Solomon islands society: a Melanesian reaction (xerox)

Film (Weds, Feb 14): “First Contact”

Reading (due Mon, Feb 19):

**Topic 2: A Long View: Migrations and Innovations (Feb 21, 26)**
When and how did the Pacific Islands come to be populated? Pacific archeology and oral history have challenged conventional, technology-centered “developmental” assumptions about human prehistory. In the Pacific we have intriguing evidence of complex skills and knowledge – e.g., open sea navigation and intensive cultivation – coexisting with simple technologies. Evidence of innovation and change forces us to recognize that there’s lots of “history” with or without documentary records or Western influence. In this way, Pacific ethnography calls into question what exactly we mean by “history”. A related challenge, in understanding Pacific cultures (also suggested in Topic 1’s readings) is to grasp differences between familiar Western and unfamiliar Pacific ways of representing and recording (in words and other media) “time”, human “agency”, and “events”.

Reading (due Weds, Feb 21):
2. P. Bellwood “The peopling of the Pacific” (packet, xerox)

Reading (due Mon, Feb 26):
1. R. Wagner (1972) “Origins” (xerox; packet; Wagner *Habu*, Chs 1 & 8)
   [Optional: this reading is bound together with the book’s Preface pp. xiii-xviii and Ch 1 “Without ships or compass” pp. 1-34]
Topic 3: History of anthropology in the Pacific (Feb 28, Mar 5)
Compared with other regional studies, Pacific anthropology has been disproportionately influential in the creation of modern anthropology as a discipline. It has been formative for several founding figures (e.g., Malinowski, Mead) and numerous other influential anthropologists (e.g., Sahlins, M. Strathern). It has been a site for the development of a number of the key topics (e.g., kinship, gift exchange) with which the discipline came to be identified. We’ll look at Malinowski’s influence on the 20th century concept of ethnographic “fieldwork”. Considering Mead, we’ll review some of the critical uses to which early Pacific ethnography (and cultural relativism) was put, as well as some of the criticisms Pacific Islanders and others have leveled against it (a topic to be revisited later in the semester).

Reading (due Weds, Feb 28):
1. B. Malinowski (1922) “Introduction” (packet; xerox; Malinowski Argonauts of the Western Pacific, pp. 1-26).
   [Optional: G. Stocking “The ethnographer’s imagination” (xerox).]

Reading (due Mon, Mar 5):
2. A. Gilliam and L. Foerstel (1992) “Margaret Mead’s contradictory legacy” (Foerstel and Gilliam, eds. Confronting the Margaret Mead Legacy, pp. 101-156)
3. A. Gilliam (1992) “Leaving a record for others: an interview with Nahau Rooney” (Foerstel and Gilliam, eds., pp. 31-54)

PACIFIC CULTURES: A SAMPLER OF KEY THEMES

Topic 4: Exchange: wealth with and without a market economy (Mar 7,12,14)
While Westerners often think of “primitive” or non-market economies as static “subsistence systems” (i.e., geared only to the limited needs of local populations), in fact they are organized also to produce valuables for sociopolitically- and ritually-motivated exchanges. Understanding the sociocultural dynamics of different non-market (also
referred to as “gift”, ceremonial, or prestige) exchange systems – like the Trobriand kula, Kyaka moka, or Mendi twem – was a foundational theme in early Pacific anthropology. It continues to be a strong focus today as researchers work to understand both the practical and the symbolic/moral articulations of these systems of exchange with regional and global market economies.

**Slide Show (Mar 7): “Pigs, Pearlsheells, and Money”**

**Readings (due Mon, Mar 12):**
2. I. Hogbin (1932) “Polynesian ceremonial gift exchanges” (xerox; packet; A. Howard, ed. *Polynesia*, pp. 27-44)
4. R. Bulmer (1960) “Political aspects of the moka ceremonial exchange system among the Kyaka people of the Western Highlands of New Guinea” (xerox; packet; Langness and Weschler, eds. *Melanesia*, pp. 240-253)

**Readings (due Weds, Mar 14):**
B. Finney (1993) “From the stone age to the age of corporate takeovers” (xerox; packet; Lockwood et al. eds. *Contemporary Pacific Societies* pp. 102-116)

**Mid-term recess (no class Mar. 19, 21)**
Remember: paper proposals are due Weds, Mar. 28
Topic 5: Politics: order with and without nation-states (Mar 26, 28, Apr 2)
Pacific cultures exemplified a wide spectrum of political types, tempting observers to treat them as “natural experiments” yielding evidence for the construction of causal models of political evolution from egalitarian bands and tribes (led by “big men”) through to hierarchically-organized “chiefdoms” and class-stratified “states”. However, historically informed ethnographic analysis casts doubt on such distinctions. Hierarchy and equality may not be entirely incompatible with one another; both are, in any case, very bound up with systems of exchange and kinship. As such, they shape contemporary nation building in the Pacific.

Readings (due Weds, Mar 28):
1. K. Read (1959) “Leadership and consensus in a New Guinea society” (xerox)
3. M. Ember (1962) “Political authority and the structure of kinship in aboriginal Samoa” (xerox; packet; A. Howard, ed. Polynesia, pp. 84-92)

Readings (due Mon, Apr 2):
3. R. Gordon and M. Meggitt “Law, war, and disorder” (xerox, packet; Gordon and Meggitt, Law and Order in the New Guinea Highlands, pp. 1-16)
4. R. Gordon and M. Meggitt “The rise of the village courts” (xerox, packet; Gordon and Meggitt, Law and Order in the New Guinea Highlands, pp. 210-36)
5. A. Arua et al. (1991) “Independence or development” (packet; xerox from Research in Melanesia 15: 76-83)

Topic 6: Gender: making sense of male and female (Apr 4, 9)
From early in this century, through the cross-disciplinary efflorescence of women’s studies beginning in the 1960s, Pacific ethnography has attended to the “gendering” of cultural experience (deepening and broadening recently with studies of sexuality). Anthropologists have explored the ways in which our own presuppositions and expectations about maleness and femaleness – all intertwined with culturally loaded ideas about power, agency, sociality, and personhood -- have colored our research into gender meanings and relations in the Pacific. While our ways of studying gender have changed over the past generation, changes have also taken place in Pacific men’s and women’s worlds over the years. We’ll consider both transformations here.

Readings (due Mon, Apr 9):

FOCUS ON CONTEMPORARY TRANSFORMATIONS

Topic 7: Cosmology and crisis (Apr 11, 16)
Remembering our first theme (the relativity of encounters between Pacific Islanders and Europeans), we consider a provocative case study concerning how Islanders understand what Western observers consider to be a novel and devastating challenge to local beliefs. Substantively, the point of these readings is to illustrate the relations among local “social organization” and “religion” and Western “biomedicine” in the context of cultural innovation. Theoretically, the point is that local cultures do not simply “respond” to “external” events any more or less than anyone else does. Rather, their ideas, values, and arguments about what’s internal or external and about what’s old or new are framed in terms of their own culturally mediated historical experience. Consequently, their actions are not always easy for observers to understand.

Readings (due Mon, Apr 16):
2. S. Lindenbaum (1979) Kuru Sorcery

Topic 8: Perspectives on globalization (Apr 18, 23, 25, 30)
Our values and perspectives shape our assessments of any people’s degree of political and cultural agency. That is, when it comes to political analysis (as our own recent presidential election also illustrated), the types of data one deems to be definitive are themselves culturally specific “political” judgements. So it makes sense to ask what the significant points of view (subject positions, perspectives) are. Can these perspectives be reconciled? On what bases (by what/whose criteria) can they each be evaluated? In making your way through these readings, think about what is meant by, or read into, our pervasive distinction between “local” and “global”. What are the strengths and limitations of this opposition? What alternatives might we (also) employ to capture Pacific realities? Note that lots of our earlier readings bear on this topic and (also as elsewhere in this syllabus) that our authors don’t always agree with one another…

Film (Weds, Apr 18): “Trobriand Cricket”
   [Optional: J. Leach “Sociohistorical conflict and the Kabisawali movement in
the Trobriands” (xerox, R. May, ed. *Micronationalist Movements in Papua New Guinea*, pp. 249-290)]

**Reading (due Mon, Apr 23):**

**Readings (due Weds, Apr 25):**

**Readings (due Mon, Apr 30):**

**Topic 9: Anthropology in the savage slot? (May 2)**
Think about popular images of Pacific Islanders (among other Others) and of anthropology more generally. Given what you know about Pacific Islanders, at the end of this semester’s readings and discussion, how should we account for the relationship between that knowledge and more widespread popular (and even non-specialist academic) representations? Where do ideas about “prehistoric” or “traditional” or “primitive” people come from and how/why are they so persistently reproduced?

**Reading (due Weds, May 2):**
2. D. Segal (2000) “‘Western Civ’ and the staging of history in American higher education” (xerox, packet; from *American Historical Review* 105(3): 770-805)

**FINAL ESSAY: DUE ON Tuesday, May 15 (Dean’s Date) at 4 p.m.**
Please see “Assignments” handout (appended)
ASSIGNMENTS

1. Presentations:
Each of you will make a presentation at some point during the semester. In your presentation, you will be expected to raise an issue or question for group discussion. You will need to summarize arguments from the week’s readings briefly in order to “set up” the issues you’d like the class to discuss. Your presentation ought to be quite brief (5 minutes long or about a page of notes is sufficient). Please write out or outline what you plan to say since that helps keep things concise. The point is to suggest an initial focus for discussion – something you were especially intrigued, incensed, or confused by. Feel free to develop handouts (using the department’s photocopier) or to use the chalkboard.

A 5-page commentary on the readings related to your presentation is due one week after the presentation. You may incorporate what you learned from the class discussion in your commentary. In writing up your presentation, you may clarify, modify, or elaborate the questions you raised in class. You may change your mind about the readings, or explore overlooked implications. You will not be expected to do additional research, or to go beyond the class readings for that day.

2. Final Essay:
A course like this – “covering” a vast region comprising peoples with diverse histories and present circumstances – cannot hope to do justice to any one place, topic, or author. You can use your final paper to complement our classwork with a more adequate, intensive focus on a topic of your choice. Alternatively (and especially if the study of Pacific cultures is new to you), you can use the paper to integrate the themes explored in separate weekly sets of readings over the course of the semester. Please see me if you would like suggestions on integrative themes for your essay.

I expect all papers to make substantive use of relevant course readings. Beyond that, papers may take a variety of forms. For example, you may choose a particular cultural group or area (e.g., Hawaii, Pohnpei, Trobriands) to focus on. Your paper can assess the current state of research there, concentrating on an issue or question (e.g., gender relations, sociopolitical transformations, cultural revitalization), or tracing out a controversy (e.g., Mead and Freeman on Samoan adolescence, Sahlins and Obeyesekere on Hawaiian history).

Alternatively, you may select a topic that cuts across areas (labor migration, Hawaiian or Kanak neocolonialism and nationalist movements). You may also take off from one or another of the syllabus “topics”, developing additional sources, a deeper ethnographic focus, etc. You are more than welcome to consult me (during office hours or via email) about your paper ideas anytime before and/or after the proposal date, including asking for initial topic suggestions and bibliographic leads.

The final essay (13-15 double-spaced pages in normal 12 pt. font, plus a complete bibliography of “References Cited”) is due on Dean’s Date (Tuesday, May 15). Place your essay in my Department mailbox by 4 p.m. A brief (3 page) proposal for your paper is due in class on Wednesday, March 28 (a week after the mid-term break). It ought to include a (2 pp.) description of the topic you plan to investigate and an (1 p.) initial list of sources.
ANT 352: Class Presentation Topics

The following is a list of possible presentation topics and dates (consult your syllabus for details). Please indicate your top three choices.

Name:
_________________________________________________________________

Weds, Feb 7 “First contact” (Hides/Lutz)
Mon, Feb 12 “First contact” (Schieffelin/Bugotu)
Mon, Feb 19 “First contact” (Sahlins)
Weds, Feb 21 “A long view” (White/Lederman)
Mon, Feb 26 “A long view” (Wagner/Finney)
Mon, Mar 5 “History of anthropology” (Mead/Waiko)
Mon, Mar 12 “Exchange” (Malinowski/Bulmer)
Weds, Mar 14 “Exchange” (Finney/Sexton)

MID-TERM BREAK

Weds, Mar 28 “Politics” (Read/Freeman)
Mon. Apr 2 “Politics” (Foster/Arua)
Mon, Apr 9 “Gender” (Mead/Weiner)
Mon, Apr 16 “Cosmology and crisis” (Glasse/Lindenbaum)
Mon, Apr 23 “Globalization” (Kiste/Petersen)
Wed, Apr 25 “Globalization” (Keesing)
Mon, Apr 30 “Globalization” (Marcus/Narakobi)