Polynesian Cultures
Anthropology 447
MWF 08:30-09:20

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This course aims at providing an understanding of contemporary Polynesian societies and cultures by examining the historical contexts in which they have developed and changed. Among the topics to be discussed are: the impact of economic change, issues of environmental degradation, changing health patterns, political developments, the consequences of contemporary migration, changes in housing and issues of cultural identity. These topics will be explored against a background of traditional Polynesian cultural patterns, including: land tenure, kinship and political organization; myth and religion; socialization and child-rearing.

Readings concerning contemporary issues will be assigned from selected journal articles; background readings will be drawn from Developments in Polynesian Ethnology, edited by Howard and Borofsky.

Students will be required to prepare a series of brief reports on topics to be discussed in class. Grades will be based on these reports, a midterm and a final examination.

Guidelines for Papers

1) Panel presentation papers: Write a 4-6 page paper to:
   · summarize the main points
   · bring in relevant background from the general reading assignment
   · compare with the situation in Rotuma, as appropriate
   · include your thoughts on the topic

Include proper citations in your paper, and a list of references at the end.
   Citation form: (author date:page; e.g., Firth 1990:27-28)
   References form: as in bibliography provided.
Papers are due on the day of the panel presentation. If you miss a panel session in which you are a participant you will be penalized one grade if you turn in your paper by the next class session and one additional half-grade for each subsequent class session delay.

2) **Response papers**: Write a 1-2 page paper to express your reactions to the topic as presented by the members of the panel. Bring in perspectives from the background readings, and from lectures, as appropriate. Papers are due one week following the panel presentation with a late penalty of a half-grade for each class session thereafter. In computing your course grade, your lowest two scores on the response papers will be omitted.

The final exam will be a take home essay, 4-6 pages, to be turned in between 12 noon and 2 pm on December 20. The essay will draw on general readings, topics addressed by panels, and Rotuman case study presentations. Students will be allowed to choose among a set of questions to address.

**Course Schedule and Syllabus**

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<th>Topic</th>
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<td>Introduction to Course</td>
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<td>Introduction to Rotuma</td>
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<td>Social Change</td>
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<td>17. Dec 20</td>
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**Monday** | **Wednesday** | **Friday**
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1. Introduction | Nomads of the Wind (1) | Discussion of Nomads
2. **Holiday** | Intro to Rotuma (1) | Intro to Rotuma (2)
READING LIST FOR ANTH 447 (POLYNESIAN CULTURES)

Aug 26  Introduction to Course

Aug 30  Nomads of the Wind

Background reading:
Kirch, Patrick (1984)

Sep 13  Environmental Issues (Group A)

Background reading:
Kirch, Patrick (1984)

1. Davidson, Janet (1984)
The Prehistory of New Zealand, Chapter 3, pp. 30-44. [PACC DU423.A55 D379 1987]

2. Bayliss-Smith, Tim et al. (1988)

Oceania’s Most Pressing Environmental Concerns. Ambio 13(5-
6):296-301. [QH540.A52; also, this issue is in PACC under same call #]


Background reading:
Bertram, I. G. and R. F. Watters

1. van der Grijp, Paul. (1993)
Islanders of the South: Production, kinship and ideology in the Polynesian kingdom of Tonga. [HMLTN/PACC HC 686.G75 1993]

Fishermen of Tonga; their means of survival.
[HMLTN/PACC SH 319.T6 H34]


4. James, Kerry (1993)

5. Lieber, Michael (1994)


7. O’Meara, Tim
The cult of custom meets the search for money in Western Samoa. In Contemporary Pacific Societies, edited by V.S. Lockwood, T.G. Harding and B.J. Wallace (1990), pp. 135-155. [HMLTN/PACC DU28.3 C66 1993]


Rotuma:
Jan Rensel (1994)
Sept 27  Social Change (Group C)

Background reading:
Social Organization, Chapter 3, DPE, pp. 47-94.


2. Ravuvu, Asesela (1987)


5. Hooper et. al. (1992)

6. Hooper et. al. (1992)

Rotuma:
Alan Howard (1991)

Jan Rensel (1991)
Oct 4  Hierarchy and Politics (Group D)

Background reading:
Marcus, George (1989)
Chieftainship, DPE, Chapter 6, pp. 175-209.

1. Sissons, Jeffrey (1994)

2. Firth, Raymond (1969)

3. Campbell, Ian (1992)

4. James, Kerry (in press)

5. Franco, Robert (in press)

6. Macpherson, Cluny (in press)

7. Meijl, Toon van (in press)

Rotuma:
Alan Howard (1966)
Alan Howard (1989)
The Resurgence of Rivalry: Politics in Post-Colonial Rotuma.

Alan Howard and Jan Rensel (In Press)
Oct 11  Child rearing and Character Development (Group A)

**Background reading:**
Ritchie, Jane and James (1989).

[HMLTN/PACC GN671.C6 B67 1987]

[HMLTN/PACC GN57.S257 C45 1986]

Talking to children in Western Samoa. *Language in Society* 11:77-104. [P41.L34]

4. Ritchie, Jane and James (1979)
*Growing Up in Polynesia*. Chapter 6, pp. 60-71.
[HMLTN/PACC HQ792.P75 R7]

5. Ritchie, Jane and James (1981)

[HMLTN/PACC GN482.C37]

7. Levy, Robert (1973)
*Tahitians: Mind and Experience in the Society Islands*. Chapter 13, pp. 430-469. [HMLTN/PACC DU870.4 L48]

**Rotuma:**

Alan Howard (1970)
Oct 18  Gender relations (Group B)

Background reading:
Woven Gods, Chapters 1-4, pp. 1-64. [HMLTN/PACC GN671.F5 H47 1995]

1. Ralston, Caroline (1993)
Maori women and the politics of tradition: what roles and power
did, do, and should Maori women exercise. The Contemporary

2. Besnier, Niko (1994)
Polynesian gender liminality through time and space. In Third
Sex, Third Gender: Beyond sexual dimorphism in culture and

3. James, Kerry (1994)
Effeminate Males and Changes in the Construction of Gender in

4. James, Kerry (1983)
Gender relations in Tonga, 1780 to 1984. Journal of the
Polynesian Society 92:233-244. [PACC GN2 .P7]

5. Huntsman, Judith and Antony Hooper (1975)
Male and female in Tokelau. Journal of the Polynesian Society
84:415-430. [PACC GN2 .P7]

Male transvestism and cultural change in Samoa. American

State, class and conversion in commodity production: Gender and
changing value in the Tongan Islands. Journal of the Polynesian
Society 67-80. and response by Kerry James to this article in
Background reading:


Rotuma:
Alan Howard (In Press)
November 1  Health and Welfare (Group D)

Background reading:


Rotuma:
Alan Howard (1979)

Jan Rensel and Alan Howard (In Press)
Nov 8  Art in Social Context (Group A)

Background reading:
Art and Aesthetics, DPE, Chapter 7, pp. 211-240.


2. Donner, William (1992)
It's the same old song but with a different meaning: Community and ethnicity in Sikaiana expressive culture. Pacific Studies 15(4):67-82. [PACC DU1.P38]


4. Mead, Hirini (Sydney) Moko
Tribal art as symbols of identity. In Art and Identity in Oceania, edited by Allan and Louise Hanson, pp. 269-281. [PACC N7399.7.A78 1990]

5. Jones, Anna Laura (1992)


Rotuma:
Alan Howard (1992)

Nov 15  Polynesian Humor (Everyone)

Background reading:
Hereniko, Vilsoni (1995)
Woven Gods: Female Clowns and Power in Rotuma

Nov 22  Migration (Group B)

Background reading:
Chapman, Murray (1991)

1. Shankman, Paul (1990)

2. Marcus, George (1990)


5. Ravuvu, Asesela (1992)

6. James, Kerry (1991)

7. Hooper et. al. (1992)

**Rotuma:**

Jan Rensel (1993)

Alan Howard and Jan Rensel (1994)
Nov 27 Polynesians Abroad (Group C)

**Background reading:**
Alan Howard and Jan Rensel (Manuscript)
The transnational Rotuman community: Issues of identity and adjustment.

1. Janes, Craig (1990)
   *Migration, Social Change, and Health: A Samoan community in urban California.* [PACC F870.S17 J36 1990]


   Seiuli sits under the window: A Samoan migrant solution to the limitations of urban residential housing in New Zealand. In *Housing and Social Change in the Pacific*, edited by Jan Rensel and Margaret Rodman.

   From houses without walls to vertical villages: Samoan housing transformations. In *Housing and Social Change in the Pacific*, edited by Jan Rensel and Margaret Rodman.

5. Hooper et. al. (1992)

6. 8. Hooper et. al. (1992)
   *Migration and Health in a Small Society*. Chapter 11. Tokelauan institutions and assimilation in the migrant communities. pp. 221-240. [PACC DU424.5 T65 M54 1992]
Dec 6  Identity (Group D)

Background reading:
Hau'ofa, Epeli (1994)

Representations of cultural identities. In Tides of History, edited by Kerry Howe, Robert C. Kiste and Brij Lal
[HMLTN/PACC DU28.3 T53 1994]

2. Howard, Alan (1990)


5. Dominy, Michelle (1990)


Rotuma:
Alan Howard (1977)

Dec 7  Polynesian Futures

Background reading:
Borofsky, Robert and Alan Howard (1989)

Dec 12  Final Exam 12-2

Issues and Questions for Discussion

Aug 30  Nomads of the Wind

1. What were the best things about this film? What were the worst things about it?
2. Did you find anything about the film to be misleading? If so, what and why?
3. What impressions does the film convey about Polynesian peoples?
4. What changes would you have advised the producers to make if you had been given the opportunity?

Sep 13  Environmental Issues

1. How susceptible are Polynesian island ecosystems to human impact?
2. What types of human activities changed the pristine environments prior to European contact?
3. What sorts of environmental problems are associated with economic development?
4. What environmental effects have been reported as a result of nuclear testing in French Polynesia?

Sep 20  Economics

1. What has been the impact of money on island social life?
2. Are Polynesian economies viable in the modern world?
3. What kinds of development would be appropriate for Polynesia?
4. Is Polynesian culture compatible with a modern economy?

Sep 27  Social Change

1. Which aspects of Polynesian culture have changed the most?
2. How has urbanization and migration to cities affected Polynesian societies?
3. What are the main problems brought about by social change?
4. How well are Polynesian peoples coping with the changes taking place in their societies?

Oct 4  Hierarchy and Politics

1. In what ways has the nature of chieftainship changed from earlier times?
2. To what extent have Polynesian societies democratized?
3. What kinds of problems have resulted from the democratization of Polynesian polities?
4. What has been the political legacy of colonialism in Polynesia?

Oct 11  Child Rearing and Character Development
1. What are the main things Polynesian parents try to teach their children?
2. In what ways do Polynesian socialization practices differ from middle class American practices?
3. What are the effects of multiple parenting and adoption on Polynesian upbringing?
4. Are Polynesian parents too harsh and abusive?

Oct 18  Gender Relations

1. How differentiated are gender roles in Polynesian societies?
2. What are the essential features of maleness? of femaleness?
3. How are gender roles and concepts of gender being affected by cultural change?
4. What roles do transvestites play in Polynesian societies, and how are those roles changing?
Oct 25 Myth & Religion

1. In what ways did traditional Polynesian religious beliefs reflect a distinctive world view?
2. What impact has Christianity had on Polynesian societies?
3. What roles do spirits play in contemporary Polynesian societies?
4. How does possession by spirits reflect strains within Polynesian societies?

Nov 1 Health and Welfare

1. How do Polynesian healing practices reflect their traditional theories of health and illness?
2. What are the main health problems among contemporary Polynesians? What does this tell us about the kinds of problems confronting Polynesians today?
3. What accounts for the high levels of violence noted in some Polynesian populations?
4. What effects are changing diets and activity patterns having on Polynesian populations?

Nov 8 Art and Society

1. What kinds of changes have taken place in Polynesian art forms over the past century?
2. In what ways do artistic productions and performances serve political causes in Polynesian societies?
3. How is tourism affecting art forms in Polynesian societies?
4. In what ways do art forms serve as symbols of ethnic identity?

Nov 22 Migration

1. What have been the main economic effects of outmigration on home islands?
2. In what ways have dependence on remittances from relatives abroad affected Polynesian societies?
3. What have been the social consequences of increased population flows from and to home islands?
4. What kinds of problems have developed on home islands as a result of the dispersal of Polynesian populations to foreign lands?

Nov 27 Polynesians Abroad

1. What factors have determined the destinations to which Polynesians have emigrated?
2. What have been the main problems encountered by Polynesian migrants in foreign lands?
3. Describe the strategies and practices Polynesians have employed in adapting to new environments?
4. How successful have Polynesians been in adapting to foreign environments?

Dec 6 Identity

1. In what ways has the construction of Polynesian people’s sense of cultural identity changed over the past century?
2. What kinds of identity issues have emerged as a result of intermarriage with non-Polynesians? as a result of living abroad?
3. What kinds of symbols (and activities) are being used by contemporary Polynesians to assert their cultural identities?
4. What are the political implications of asserting cultural identities in modern Polynesia?

**Comments**

Videotapes: We used excerpts from our own videotapes from fieldwork to illustrate topics for several weeks. Vilsoni Hereniko's videotape of a clown performing at a "Rotuman Wedding," and "Samoan Heart," about two contemporary Samoan artists from a video series distributed by "Pacific Islanders in Communication," were very effective. We also began the course by showing the first episode of the Nature program, "Nomads of the Wind," which generated a lively discussion about representation.

Student panel presentations: The first time we taught this course we assigned specific readings to individual students, five or six to present on a given day. The second time we characterized the reading list as a "starter list" and assigned the TOPICS to the panels as groups, leaving it to them to decide among themselves how to cover the topic and who would present what. It worked much better to allow them this element of choice, and the presentations really came across as a coherent panel. Some students still stayed within a sort of "book report" frame, but others explored topics in depth, reading all of the suggested readings and bringing in additional sources. In the evaluations the students said they got a lot out of giving the panel presentations (they noticeably improved over the course of the semester), but they were somewhat less favorable about listening to their fellow students.

1/97