

**Anthropology 3282 – The Cultural History of American Communities**  
**Spring 2013**  
**Mondays and Wednesdays – 12:40-2:05**  
**340 Manning Hall**

**Dr. Katherine Lambert-Pennington (Dr. L-P)**  
**Office Hours: Mondays 11-12 and by appointment**  
**Office: 302 b Manning Hall**  
**Phone: 678- 3328**  
**Email: [almbtrpn@memphis.edu](mailto:almbtrpn@memphis.edu)**

**Graduate Assistant: April Steele**  
**Email: [astele@memphis.edu](mailto:astele@memphis.edu)**  
**Office Hours: TBA**

### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course is a study both “in” and “of” American communities. We will look at various kinds of communities in the U.S. – how they define themselves, what binds them together, and what threatens to drive them apart. We will critically examine the concept of “community,” exploring how its meanings and importance have changed over time. We will explore how issues such as geography, kinship networks, politics, social action, religion, ethnicity, race, and class factor into American community life. Finally, we will consider strategies for rebuilding and redeveloping contemporary communities. Note: This course includes a service-learning requirement.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- To explore the varied kinds of communities in contemporary America and place them in political, economic, and historic contexts.
- To understand how American communities have transformed over time, with specific attention to the interaction of economic (i.e., work practice) and social ties (i.e., familial, religious, ethnic) in forming and transforming communities within the United States.
- To examine how various ethnic groups have used communities as a starting place to both assimilate and make their adjustments to American as well as maintain ties to the culture and heritage of their home country.
- To develop a conceptual base for theorizing community and community building.
- To examine and employ tools and strategies for understanding and participating in community building efforts

### **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

This course applies an interdisciplinary and holistic framework to examine the emergence and transformation of American communities, and applies a self-guided, active learning model. In the classroom, lectures and films will be complemented by group discussions, student-led discussions, and student presentations.

1. It is the student’s responsibility to read and understand the syllabus. Special circumstances may require modifications in the syllabus and in the assignments. If this occurs, advance notice will be given in class and these changes will become part of the syllabus.
2. Students are required to have a University of Memphis email account and access to eCourseware and to check them daily for communication regarding course content. All

emails from me to you will use the University of Memphis system and eCourseware. If you use a different email system, be sure to forward your U of M account to that other address.

3. Students are expected to attend class regularly and complete all assignments. Success in this class requires consistent attendance, regular class participation, and keeping up on all reading and work assignments.
4. Cell phones need to be turned off or set to vibrate during class. Likewise, emailing and text messaging during class are very distracting and are strictly forbidden in the classroom. Students that cannot refrain from texting/emailing during class will be asked to leave.
5. Late assignments will only be permitted for medical reasons, family emergencies or official University business. Written documentation is required.
6. Excused absences for religious holidays and other events must be cleared with the instructor in advance.
7. ***Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.*** Whenever you use another person's words or ideas you must properly cite them. Word for word copying of another person's words without proper attribution is known as plagiarism and is a serious form of academic dishonesty. Students engaging in academic dishonesty of any kind will receive an F in this course and will be reported to Judicial Affairs. Refer to the University of Memphis' Office of Judicial and Ethical Programs for its policy on academic misconduct: <http://saweb.memphis.edu/judicialaffairs/dishonesty/definitions.htm>.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Readings:** The syllabus includes a reading schedule. Students are expected to complete all reading prior to coming to class. Required texts will be available at the University bookstore, and all other readings will be held on reserve at the library and on E-courseware.

### Required Texts

1. Venkatesh, Sudhir. 2008. Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist takes to the Streets. Penguin Press.
2. Checker, Melissa. 2005. Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town. New York: New York University Press.
3. Putnam, Robert with Lewis M. Feldstein. 2003. Better Together: Restoring the American Community. New York: Simon and Schuster.
4. Additional required readings are noted on the reading schedule by the author's last name. They are available digitally on E-courseware and a hard copy is available on Reserve in McWherter Library.

**Discussion questions:** will be posted on E-courseware for each reading; these questions will be the basis of our class discussion, and exams. Students are strongly encouraged to use these as a learning tool while you read.

**Films:** Many of the films we will view in this class are not rentable and therefore not available to students outside of class. Some of the films may be rated "R." Exams and writing assignments will be based in part on films seen in class. It is the students' responsibility to attend class and understand

the content of the films. All films listed in the course schedule are tentative; specific titles and viewing dates are subject to change.

**Attendance:** Attendance is necessary for success in this course. Late arrivals are distracting. If you are more than 5 minutes late, you will be recorded as late and points will be deducted from your class participation grade. Unexcused absences will be reflected in your participation grade. Keep the instructor informed if you have an emergency during the semester that will require you to be late or miss a class.

**Class Participation:** Participation means *participation*, not simply being present.

Discussion comprises an essential part of the course. The success of class discussions depends on all of us. Come to class on time and prepared. Regular attendance and engagement with the class materials is essential. Participation counts for 10% of your final grade (100 points). At the end of the semester you will be asked to evaluate your own participation, although the instructor has the final say on your participation grade.

- Do not be afraid to speak out about the readings – after all, that is why we are here.
- Allow other people to also speak and participate in the class; please do not dominate the discussion.
- Be courteous and respectful of one another. Do not laugh at or belittle anyone's remarks. While you may not agree with them (this is fine), try to build a constructive dialogue around your differing interpretations of a reading.
- Listen to what is being said rather than who is saying it – responses should not be personalized, and disagreements in opinion are not to be taken personally. Remember that we will be talking about ideas and learning from one another.

**Exams:** There will be three exams (February 27<sup>th</sup>, April 1<sup>st</sup>, May 8<sup>th</sup>). Exams will cover material presented in lecture, films, reading, and during class discussion (students should listen and learn from one another – such exchanges may appear on exams). Exams may include multiple-choice questions, but will more generally be comprised of core concept identification, short answer questions, and open-ended essay questions that tie several readings and films together.

**Rite of Passage Paper** – Choose an American rite of passage ritual – write a 3 – page description of the ritual/process, including the various people involved, symbols used in the ritual and their meaning, and physical and social changes the individual experiences as a result of their participation. Additional information will be handed out closer to the due date. Due March 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Service Learning:** Since the spring of 2010, Dr. L-P's students have worked with community partners in the Vance Neighborhood, near the FedEx Forum, and you will continue in their footsteps this spring by participating in activities connected with St. Patrick's Neighborhood Outreach activities. Over the course of the semester, students will spend 12 hours assisting with the Common Ground Community Garden, Soup on Sundays/More than a Meal, Spring Health Festival, and other community building activities. If you are unable to fulfill the service-learning component of this class, please see Dr. L-P immediately to work out an alternative plan. At the end of the semester, you will write a reflection paper on your experiences.

- 1) *Service Learning*: Students are expected to commit 12 hours outside of class during the semester and participate in the Foote Homes Festival (4/9) and at least 2 of the following activities:
  - St. Patrick's More than a Meal Program – Sundays 9:30-11:30 & 11:30-2
  - St. Patrick's Common Ground Community Garden – Saturdays during March, specifics TBA.
  - St. Patrick's Spring Health Festival at Foote Homes – 9 am – 2 pm on Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup>
  - VAC Clean Up Days & other activities – Periodically throughout semester, specifics TBA.

You will receive more specific information during the semester regarding the activities, places, and times.

- 2) *Reflection Paper* – Students will write a paper of 4-5 pages reflecting on your experiences with the Vance Avenue Collaborative Project. Your paper should describe how you participated, what you learned, explicitly connect with ideas/concepts from the class, discuss how you and/or your ideas might have been changed by the experience, and reflect on what you learned about anthropology and what anthropologists do. Additional instructions will be provided during the semester.

Your participation in service learning and the reflection paper will be worth 20% of your final grade (200 points). Due May 8<sup>th</sup>.

**Extra Credit:** Students will have three opportunities during the semester to earn extra credit.

- 1) Vance neighborhood project additional hours – for every hour over the 12 required hours that you complete, you can earn **3 points of extra credit toward your final grade.**
- 2) “My Community” Paper - Students have an opportunity to write a 4-5 page paper (double-spaced) on a community to which they belong and actively participate. The reflective essay will describe personal observations, experiences, and participation in a local community and will include discussion of shared values, and responses, changes, and/or adaptations that are occurring or have occurred due to outside forces. The paper should also explicitly connect students' experiences of community back to the readings and discussions. Examples of a local community include (but are not limited to) your neighborhood, faith-based organization, life style group, or work group. **DUE by Monday March 18<sup>th</sup>. Worth up to 30 EC points.**
- 3) Film Review: Students can view the film “Farmingville POV” and then write a 2-3 page (double-spaced) reflection paper. The central issue in "Farmingville" – whether or not to build a hiring hall for day laborers – also touches on several important content areas, including how U.S. laws and infrastructure are at odds with an increasingly globalized economy, what it means to identify as "American", how class privilege and race intersect, and how racism can escalate from rhetoric to violence (including an attack on day laborers committed by local high school students). Extra credit papers should touch on one or more of the above areas covered in the film and make connections to course themes, readings, and discussions. **DUE: April 29<sup>th</sup>. Worth up to 25 points toward your final grade.**

## **GRADING**

Grades will be calculated based on student performance on quizzes, service learning, papers, exams, and presentations, as well as participation in class.

<b>Exam #1</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Exam #2</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Exam # 3</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Contemporary Rite of Passage</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Service Learning Participation</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Service Learning Reflection Paper</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>In-class Participation</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1000 points</b>

### **Students with Disabilities**

The University encourages the full participation of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are invited to meet individually with the instructor to discuss any accommodations that may be needed for successful participation in this course.

### **Inclement Weather**

In the event that inclement weather requires the cancellation of classes at the University of Memphis, local radio and television media will be immediately notified. Additionally, the University of Memphis has established an inclement Weather Hotline at 678-0888.

### **Additional Notes:**

## READING SCHEDULE

Please Note: This is a working schedule and may be modified during the term.

### HOW DO ANTHROPOLOGISTS STUDY COMMUNITIES?

#### Wednesday - January 23rd

Introduction to class and discussion of syllabus

#### Monday – January 28<sup>th</sup> - the Study of Community & Culture

**READ:** Gottdiener & Budd, “Community” (e-Courseware)

**READ:** Carl Moore, “What is community?” (E-Courseware)

**READ:** We have met the Nacirema, and they are Us(ans) (e-Courseware)

**Video:** Introduction to the Vance Avenue Collaborative -

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZTJ0g1i\\_gE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZTJ0g1i_gE)

*Question:* What makes an “American” community?

*Topics:* Defining community; overview of anthropological approaches to studying community; qualitative research methods, service learning & engaged scholarship; defining community

### THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

#### Wednesday – January 30<sup>th</sup> – Native Americans and Early Settlers

**READ:** Wall, Introduction & Chapter 1 (E-courseware)

**Review:** Colonial Timeline at <http://www.timepage.org/spl/13timeline.html>

**FILM:** We Shall Remain, Episode 1: After the Mayflower

([http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/the\\_films/episode\\_1\\_about](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/the_films/episode_1_about))

#### Monday – February 4<sup>th</sup> - Church, Family, & Community

**READ:** Wall, Chapter 4 & Afterword (E-courseware)

*Topics:* Discussion of Wall Readings - Family and Community in Early America

*Questions:* How does the role of family and community in early America compare to today? What role do faith-based organizations play in communities today? How does this differ from the role of the church in early America?

### THE PRODUCTIVE TENSIONS OF INDIVIDUALISM AND COMMUNALISM

#### Wednesday – February 6<sup>th</sup> – American Character

**READ:** Bellah, Chapter 2 (E-courseware)

*Topics:* American Individualism, historical archetypes of individualism

*Questions:* What is the relationship between individualism, freedom, and civic participation?

#### Monday – February 11<sup>th</sup> – Finding Oneself - Coming of Age in America

**READ:** Bellah, Chapter 3 (E-courseware)

*Topics:* Industrialization, suburbanization, rites of passage

*Lecture:* World Systems Theory, Industrialization, Globalization

**Wednesday – February 13<sup>th</sup> – Childhood, Freedom, Progress, and Profit**

**READ:** Cohen, Dangerous Assumptions of American Culture (E-courseware)

**READ:** Robbins, Mickey, Nicky, and Barbie: Kinderculture in America (E-courseware)

*Topics:* Changing American values; changing role of children; globalization

*Questions:* What are the pros and cons of multinational companies exporting American culture?

**Monday – February 18<sup>th</sup> – The Amish**

**READ:** Hostetler & Huntington, “Amish Culture” & “Socialization Patterns and the Life Cycle” (E-courseware)

**FILM:** The Amish: How They Survive

*Topics:* Amish Culture & Community

*Questions:* What mechanisms and practices do the Amish use to maintain and build their community? What challenges do they face?

*In-class:* Quiz

**Wednesday – February 20<sup>th</sup> – Rumspringa – Coming of Age in America**

**FILM:** The Devil’s Playground

**Monday – February 25<sup>th</sup> – Contemporary Rites of Passage**

**READ:** TBD

*Topics:* Devil’s Playground, contemporary rites of passage in US, review for exam #1

*Questions:* What aspects of Amish culture are challenged and/or reinforced during Rumspringa? Why do you think so many Amish end up returning to their home community after Rumspringa?

<b>MANY AMERICAS – RACE, CLASS, ETHNICITY &amp; COMMUNITY</b>
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**Wednesday – February 27<sup>th</sup> – Exam #1**

**Monday – March 4<sup>th</sup> – Racing the Nation**

**READ:** Thirteen Key Supreme Court Cases and the Civil War Amendments (E-courseware)

**FILM:** Race the Power of Illusion – Part 3 “The House we Live In”

*Topics:* Social construction of race, social inequality

*Questions:* What historical forces and factors account for health, educational, and economic disparities in the US?

**Wednesday – March 6<sup>th</sup> – The growth of American cities & its impact on American Community**

**GUEST SPEAKER:** Dr. Ken Reardon, Chair, Graduate Program in City and Regional Planning, University of Memphis

*Topics:* Economic and industrial shifts, urban to suburban migration, Tenant movements, Alinsky organizing

**DUE:** Rite of Passage Write Up

**Monday – March 11<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> – Spring Break – No Class**

You are encouraged to read Gang Leader for a Day over Spring Break

**Monday – March 18<sup>th</sup> – Immigration, Community, & Social Capital**

**READ:** Gibau, Contested Identities: Narratives of Race and Ethnicity in the Cape Verdean Diaspora (E-courseware)

**READ:** Venkatesh, Gang Leader for a Day, Chapter 1

**FILM:** Some Kind of Funny Porto Rican: A Cape Verdean American Story

*Topics:* Immigrant communities, syncretism, urban redevelopment, gentrification

**Wednesday – March 20<sup>th</sup> – Finding community in the projects**

**READ:** Venkatesh, Gang Leader for a Day, Chapter 2 & 3

*Topics:* Racing the nation, ethnographic methods, Robert Taylor Homes (RTH), communities within public housing

*Questions:* How did Venkatesh's methods shift over time? Why?

**Monday – March 25<sup>th</sup> – Finding community in the projects**

**READ:** Venkatesh, Gang Leader for a Day, Chapters 4 & 5

*Topics:* reciprocity, community institutions, social capital & social networks, community leaders, the dynamics of gang hierarchy

*Questions:* Who are the key stakeholders in RTH? What ideas about and goals for the community do both residents and the gang share? How do they conflict? What practices/rituals keep the community together? Break down a sense of community?

**Wednesday – March 27<sup>th</sup> – Finding community in the projects**

**READ:** Venkatesh, Gang Leader for a Day, Chapter 8

*Topics:* the complexities of community & change, review for exam #2

*Questions:* What ethical issues does Venkatesh face during his research?

**Monday – April 1<sup>st</sup> – Exam #2**

<p><b>WHERE HAVE ALL THE FRONT PORCHS GONE? REBUILDING COMMUNITY IN AMERICA</b></p>
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**Wednesday – April 3<sup>rd</sup> – Environmental Racism & Community Action**

**READ:** Checker, Polluted Promises, Appendix, Chapter 1

**FILM:** TBD

*Topics:* Ethnographic methods, Introducing Hyde Park

*Questions:* What is advocacy anthropology? What is activist anthropology? How are Checker's methods different from Venkatesh's?

**Monday – April 8<sup>th</sup> –Polluted Promises**

**READ:** Checker, Polluted Promises, Chapters 2 & 3

*Topics:* Environmental racism

*Questions:* What is environmental racism? What has been the relationship between the mainstream environmental movement and people of color? How has that changed over time?

**Wednesday – April 10<sup>th</sup> – – Polluted Promises**

**READ:** Checker, Polluted Promises, Chapter 4

*Topics:* the social history of Hyde Park and the meaning of home & land

*Questions:* How are land, housing, and the environment connected for residents of Hyde Park? How is the agricultural past of Georgia connected to residents' sense of place & belonging?

**Monday – April 15<sup>th</sup> – Polluted Promises**

**READ:** Checker, Polluted Promises, Chapters 5 & 6

*Topics:* HAPIC, community activism, and leaders, & environmental justice

*Questions:* What is the history of organizing and political activism in Hyde Park? How does this contribute to their fight for environmental justice?

**Wednesday – April 17<sup>th</sup> – Polluted Promises**

**READ:** Checker, Chapter 7

*Topics:* The environmental movement, HAPIC's fight, the outcomes, and the future of Hyde Park

*Questions:* What kinds of coalitions did residents of Hyde Park build to bring attention to the environmental issues in their community? What impact did residents' political struggle have on the community?

**Monday – April 22<sup>nd</sup> – Community Building and Social Capital**

**READ:** Van Willegan, Community Assets and the Community Building Process (e-courseware)

**READ:** Putnam, Better Together, Introduction & Chapter 1 (Valley Interfaith)

*Topics:* Applied Anthropology, engaged scholarship, asset based development, SoMe RAP

*Questions:* How does engaged scholarship share with advocacy/activist anthropology? How does it differ? What community based assets does the Vance Neighborhood have?

**Wednesday – April 24<sup>th</sup> – Rebuilding American Community**

**READ:** Putnam, Better Together, Chapter 4 (Dudley Street)

**FILM:** Holding Ground

*Topics:* Community organizing and neighborhood change, social capital reprise

**Monday – April 29<sup>th</sup> – Rebuilding American Community -**

**READ:** Putnam, Better Together, Chapter 2 & 6 (Branch Library & Saddle Back Church)

*Topics:* Discussion of Holding Ground, community institutions, faith based organizations, community assets, public spaces of community and community building

*Questions:* How do the Putnam case studies compare to VAC? To South Memphis Project?

**Wednesday – May 1<sup>st</sup> – Rebuilding American Community**

**READ:** Putnam, Better Together, Conclusion

*Topics:* Compare and contrast Putnam and Checker, review for exam

**DUE:** Service Learning Reflection Paper

**Thursday – May 2<sup>nd</sup> – Study Day**

**Wednesday – May 8<sup>th</sup> – Exam #3 – 10 am – 12 noon.**