



The Culture of Modern Greece: The Ethnography of a Society in Transition

Coursenumber: ANTH 333

Professor: Aimee Placas

Course Description:

Students abroad are already proto-anthropologists, trying to make sense of the rules of the society around them so that they can adapt to the rhythms and practices of their new, temporary home. This class turns that experience into a structured exploration, offering both history and social context that will allow life in Greece to make sense, and giving assignments that will have students exploring that society in ways they might not otherwise find on their own. We focus on the culture(s) of Modern Greece from the 1960s onward, drawing on authors from across the social sciences to help us identify key realms that make life in Greece distinct. We will also train more specifically in the theories and methods of anthropology, identifying how the focuses of anthropologists writing ethnographies in Greece have changed over the past decades, learning thus both about social changes in Greece and about the history and scope of anthropology at the same time. Tying this content to the experiential realm, we will try on different lenses that social scientists have created for us to look through as we conduct ethnographic research, testing what new insights we can gather when we examine the world through theories of space, ritual, performance, gender, symbol, and more. This structure will allow the student an understanding of contemporary society in Greece and a developing awareness of their own cultural conditionings and ethnocentrism.

What this course offers you:

We'll start our course by reading ethnographic texts from those anthropologists who first came to study village life in Greece after the 1950s. We'll try to gain an idea of what life was like for those rural Greeks, as well as understand the assumptions, methods, and goals of those ethnographers doing research there. We'll also be looking at the period of urbanization that began in Greece after the 1960s, when for the next few decades many of those villages slowly emptied, and people sought new employment opportunities in urban centers, as well as reading ethnographies from anthropologists who continue to research in rural areas and islands, but who change the way that anthropologists look at village life, examining how those villagers are intimately connected with urban and global concerns. Through these ethnographies we'll be challenging the simple rural-urban and modern-traditional dichotomies, and trying to think in more complex ways about these geographic spaces and their interconnectivities. Beyond the readings listed on the syllabus, I'll be bringing in and describing a number of additional important ethnographies on Greece, or we'll be reading short selections from our extended bibliography in class. At the same time, we'll be exploring the continuities and changes that we see between the life and mores that these ethnographies describe, and the life unfolding in Athens around us.

We'll also be reading more contemporary ethnographies, and we'll add in readings from across the social sciences. These will be more obviously relevant to the practices of everyday life around us, and another step towards understanding significant themes in modern society. Some of these will continue topics from our earlier readings, while others pick up subjects previously unexplored in the ethnography of Greece, as Europeanization, the financial crisis, and other forces of change create a context for new identities and new possibilities in Greek life, not just for Greeks now, but for new immigrants too. Throughout all of this will be identifying the specific theoretical approaches that our authors have used in their research, as well as reading some more general pieces of social theory (and learning about others in lectures), so that we can develop tools for analysis that students will use in their own research assignments. The final two classes of the semester are set aside to cover topics of

interest to the students which are not already on the syllabus; we will collectively select those topics after midterm.

In addition to learning about life in Greece through our readings and discussion, you'll also be conducting short research assignments. These projects will be students' own exercises in the ethnographic exploration of cultures in Greece, using the methodology used by ethnographers and learning new ways to see and interrogate what's going on around you in everyday life.

What this course asks of you:

Curiosity. We begin each class with 10 minutes of open question and answer time irrelevant to the main subject of the day. I expect students to have questions. What is this object for, what did that interaction mean, what's the significance of this news event, how does that institution work, what are the social norms concerning this, what are the cultural beliefs concerning that, and so on. You should continuously be interacting with the world by paying close attention to the details of everyday life that are going on around you, trying to figure them out, and using this class to do so.

Bravery. Not everybody enjoys talking to strangers. You're going to have to find a way to do so. I expect you to treat every single social interaction you have as an opportunity to learn more about life in Greece.

Open-mindedness. Students need to continuously be aware that other people have goals, expectations, common sense, morals, priorities, and ways of doing things that are vastly different than your own. Students are expected to explore the logics behind these differences, regardless of whether they're differences that make them happy or uncomfortable.

Intellectual rigor. I will be giving you all of the tools you need to think like an anthropologist. You'll need to put them into practice yourself, and this will take time and effort.

Course goals:

Content. You will gain an understanding of the cultural changes, and continuities, that have unfolded in Greece over the past 50 years. You will become familiar with the aspects of cultural change most often discussed and debated in Greek society today, and with the major topics of importance covered in the ethnographic writings on Greece.

Disciplinary. You will understand the theoretical perspectives of anthropology and their development over time, as well as see how approaches from disciplines across the social sciences can be combined to create a more holistic understanding of a society.

Methodology. You will become familiar with the participant-observation methodologies of ethnography and put them into practice. These research methodologies are relevant not just to anthropologists, but also in sociology, behavioral economics, communications, marketing, and more.

Experiential. As part of the study abroad experience, you will engage with the challenges, possibilities, and problems of studying another culture while in the midst of it, as an interactive participant and researcher in the culture you are immersed in.

Personal. You will return home with a broader appreciation of the many ways it is possible to be a human being, allowing you a broader world view and an increased sense of empathy towards others.

Student Assessments:

Participation: Students are expected to attend class having read the assignment for that day, to have a copy of that assignment with them in class, to participate in the discussion, and to complete any non-written observation assignments that we'll be making part of our class discussion, all as part of their participation grade. Absences will affect your grade.

Written work: Students will complete three short written assignments over the course of the semester, and one ongoing photography assignment. A detailed description of all assignments will be available on the course's Moodle page. For assignments with a set due date, late work drops 10% in grade for the first day it is late, and

5% more for each day thereafter. Written assignments must be shared with me as Google docs, and are due at 10pm on the evening of the due date. If you plan to be traveling that evening, you need to share it before you go, because internet access is not a constant. You can alternatively leave a printed copy in my mailbox in the faculty room. The written work assesses the energy students put into doing ethnographic research and their ability to apply the theoretical tools acquired in the class towards analyzing their own research findings.

Short Exams: This course has no cumulative final exam. Instead, four short in-class exams will be given over the course of the semester, during class time (with the fourth held during exam week).

Grading:

Short Exams: 40%

Four assignments: 50%

Participation: 10%

400 Level Students:

For advanced students taking the course at the 400 level, the four research assignments will be replaced by one semester-long ethnographic research project. There will also be additional ethnographic readings and methodology readings specific to that project, assigned on an individual basis.

My availability:

Because of students' varied schedules, I won't keep set office hours, but will happily make time for you when you request it. You can send me an email or call (or text and I'll call you back), or just ask me after class. It's often easiest to arrange to meet before class, and I try to keep my schedule free for that purpose.

Expect a response from me for emails or texts within 24 hours, but not immediately; I set time aside for answering emails once a day.

Schedule:

The readings below are available in .pdf form on Moodle. Most of them are shorter selections of the full text. Please have a copy of the reading with you in class; the printing allowance is extended for students enrolled in this course. Some dates are marked "TBA": this means that the reading will be announced closer to the reading date for a topic particularly relevant to current events, to allow for the most recent scholarship to be assigned.

Sept. 4 Introduction to the course

Sept. 6 Greek history overview lecture

1. Friedl, Ernestine. *Vasilika: A Village In Modern Greece*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1962
2. Du Boulay, Juliet. *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974

Sept. 11 The ethnography of Crete (in preparation for your upcoming trip)

1. Kalantzis, K., 2016. "Proxy Brigands and Tourists: Visualizing the Greek-German Front in the Debt Crisis." *Visual Anthropology Review*, 32(1), pp.24-37.
2. Handout on "Tourist Gaze" (read before class)

Sept. 13 NO CLASS (Field trip to Crete)

Sept. 18 Early ethnography of Greece

1. Just, Roger. *A Greek Island Cosmos: Kinship & Community on Meganisi*. Oxford: James Currey, 2000.

Sept. 20 Walk: Pangrati, urbanization, and neighborhood space

1. Du Boulay, Juliet. *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 DUE DATE FOR ASSIGNMENT 1 (share as Google document)

Sept. 25 Religion

1. Leontis, Artemis. "Chapter Two: Religion." in *Culture and Customs of Greece*. Greenwood Press, 2009.

Sept. 27 QUIZ 1

1. In class Movie - "All That Glitters"

Oct. 2 Walk: The cemetery

1. Danforth, Loring. *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Oct. 4 Kinship & Family structure

1. Handouts

Oct. 9 Food & Culture

1. Yiakoumaki, Vassiliki. "'Local,' 'Ethnic,' and 'Ritual' Food: On the Emergence of 'Cultural Diversity' in Greece since Its Integration in the EUropean Union." *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 24, no. 2 (2006): 415-445.

Oct. 11 Ethnicity & Minorities

1. Close, David. "Divided Attitudes to Gypsies in Greece." *Modern Greek Studies (Australia and New Zealand)* 14 (2012).

Oct. 16 Migrant groups

1. Article Selections TBA

Oct. 18 QUIZ 2

1. In class Documentary - "Recording my Reality"

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22 DUE DATE FOR ASSIGNMENT 2 (share as Google document)

Oct. 23 NO CLASS (Tuesday/Thursday makeup day)

Oct. 25 NO CLASS (Field trip to Peloponnese)

Oct. 30 Lecture on the Greek crisis

1. Kostis Karpozilos. "Golden Dawn: From the Margins of Greece to the Forefront of Europe." in *Greek Society in Crisis*, Berghahn, forthcoming 2018.

Nov. 1 Continuing discussing the crisis

1. Sappho Xenakis & Leonidas Cheliotis. "Crime and the Crisis: The Politics of Insecurity in Greece" in *Greek Society in Crisis*, Berghahn, forthcoming 2018.

Nov. 6 Gender and Sexuality (these may be updated)

1. Alexandra Halkias, *The Empty Cradle Of Democracy: Sex, Abortion, And Nationalism In Modern Greece*, Duke University Press, 2004.
2. Heather Paxson, *Making Modern Mothers: Ethics And Family Planning In Urban Greece*, University of California Press, 2004.

Nov. 8 Gender and Sexuality continued (these may be updated)

1. Yannakopoulos, Kostas. "Cultural Meanings of Loneliness: Kinship, Sexuality and (Homo)sexual Identity in Contemporary Greece." *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*. 19, no. 2 (2010): pp 265-282.
2. Kirtsoglou, Elisabeth. *For the Love of Women: Gender, Identity and Same-Sex Relations in a Greek Provincial Town*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Nov. 13 QUIZ 3

1. In class documentary "Alive in the Concrete" <https://vimeo.com/115711129>

Nov. 15 Music & Dance

1. Elafros, Athena. "Greek Hip Hop: Local and Translocal Authentication in the Restricted Field of Production." *Poetics* 41, no. 1 (February 2013): 75–95.
2. Dance documentary in class.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17 DUE DATE FOR ASSIGNMENT 3 (share as Google document)

Nov. 20 NO CLASS (Recess)

Nov. 22 NO CLASS (Recess)

Nov. 27 Contemporary views of the ancient past

1. Eleana Yalouri, *The Acropolis: Global Fame, Local Claim*, Berg, 2001.

Nov. 29 Class selection of topic

Dec. 5 Class selection of topic

Dec. 7 Wrap-up and discussion of your research project findings

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 7 DUE DATE FOR ASSIGNMENT 4

Dec. 13 QUIZ 4 (Exam week)