

# ANTH 402 (Online Version): *Dynamics of Biocultural Diversity*

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**Online Wimba Office Hours:**

2-2:50 on Wednesday 9/2 and 12/9, and Thursday 11/12

11-11:50 on Friday 9/11, 9/25, 10/9, 10/16, 11/6, 11/20, & 12/11

**Face-to-face Office Hours:**

Wednesdays 12:30-13:45, in AL 411, except

not 9/23 & 11/4 due to scheduled faculty meeting, and not 11/11 due to Veteran's Day.

Private Wimba, live, or phone consultations: Happily provided by appointment

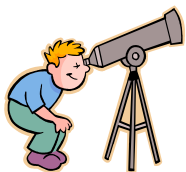
*This syllabus is intended to guide us through the semester. However, circumstances can change and so I reserve the right to change the syllabus as needed to ensure that we fulfill the objectives of the course. You will receive full and fair notification regarding any such changes.*

**Course Prerequisite:** The prerequisite for enrolling in this course is a previous course in biology. Regarding the pre-requisite, please see the FAQ section on Blackboard.

**Distance or Online learning Prerequisites:** The prerequisite for enrolling in the online version of this course is total online or distance learning preparedness. Please take SDSU's 'readiness survey' at [https://sunspot.sdsu.edu/pls/webapp/survey.hybrid\\_learning.main](https://sunspot.sdsu.edu/pls/webapp/survey.hybrid_learning.main) and **prepare your computer for the course** as per the instructions contained in the orientation letter that all enrolled students receive about one week prior to the first day of class.

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## Course Focus



The focus of this course is **the synergistic interaction of biology and culture in human populations over time**. The course is directly relevant to our quest to understand the historical and contemporary basis for the bio-cultural diversity of humanity, and to ensure a healthful future for people in all parts of the world and in all walks of life.

Course teachings have immediate relevance to our day-to-day lives, too, as we struggle to decide (for example) what to eat and who to eat with, or whether or not to get immunized. They illuminate how even the most seemingly ‘universal’ and ‘biological’ human experiences (e.g., eating, family building) are actually quite cultural and, as such, can vary quite drastically from group to group.

The principles we will study have relevance not only for how we think about bio-cultural differences and similarities but also for views on state, national, and even global policies related to these, such as those related to emerging epidemics or current bioethical debates (e.g., regarding the distribution of pharmaceutical drugs). Through this course, you will come to see that even small changes in the bio-cultural status quo can have—and have had—extraordinary effects on the trajectory of humankind.

***Students with Disabilities:*** If you have a disability requiring accommodation, please let me know at the start of the course so that accommodation can be assured. You may also wish to contact Student Disability Services at 619.594.6473, or visit [www.sdsu.edu/dss](http://www.sdsu.edu/dss).

## Overview of how the course ‘works’

The course is organized into several sections, each with subsidiary lessons or ‘modules’ followed by an online test. Simply go to Blackboard, enter the relevant section (starting with 1), and work through the modules by completing assigned reading (etc.) in the order presented. Then, on the designated testing day, take the section test. Afterward, simply move on to the next section.

Please note that **each section of the course is only available online during a certain timeframe**. That is, although **you may work at your own pace within a given section**, making this course ideal for anyone with a complicated schedule, **you must complete all work** for that section, including the section test, **by the closing date noted** in the lesson-by-lesson schedule. *This arrangement keeps students on track and ensures that the work entailed in this course—for you, for me, and for our TA (if we have one)—is evenly distributed throughout the semester.*

A Google Calendar has been set up listing key due dates for this course as well as online office hours. It is titled: ANTH402. To add it to your own calendar set up, click ‘add’ on your calendar page and paste in: <http://www.google.com/calendar/ical/tr4c89t8aoi3h12u59ckg2okt4%40group.calendar.google.com/public/basic.ics>. If you don’t want to sign up for Google Calendars but still wish to view the timetable, go to: [http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=tr4c89t8aoi3h12u59ckg2okt4%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America/Los\\_Angeles](http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=tr4c89t8aoi3h12u59ckg2okt4%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America/Los_Angeles). For more information on Google Calendars, click: <http://www.google.com/googlecalendar/about.html>

## **A note on why course documents (including this one) are so dang long**

This is an online course. You can work at your own pace from week to week, so long as you complete assigned work by our set deadlines. **You can work where you want, when you want.** However, because this is an online course, we won't have any time together during which I can lay out instructions for you verbally. That means I have to pack them all into documents like this.

**This and the schedule provide for you a detailed map of the course and a plan for success** as you move through the semester with me. I say 'with me' because I am going to be here with you every step of the way and I value highly teacher-student interaction. The documentation simply **anticipates and answers questions students will have about the course** so that they don't need to be asked, saving you time and protecting you from the anxiety that can accompany vague instructions.

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### **Ground rules**

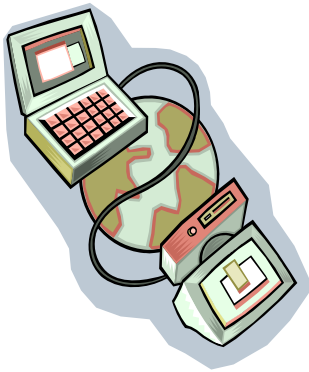
Students and teachers have obligations to each other. Successful teaching and learning depends to a great degree on honoring these obligations.

***Here is what I expect from students:*** Having made your informed choice to become a member of this class, you will enter every class module and give your full attention to the material there. You will complete and submit all required work on time. You will treat everyone in the class, including the professor, with the respect due to all human beings. (If someone in our class is treating you disrespectfully, you will alert me immediately.) You acknowledge that previous academic preparation (e.g., writing skills) will affect your performance in this course. You acknowledge that your perception of effort, by itself, is not enough to justify a distinguished grade. You will not plagiarize or otherwise steal the work of others. You will not make excuses for your failure to do what you ought. You will accept the consequences of your actions.

If you have any questions about SDSU's policy regarding cheating, see p.13 of this SDSU policy document: [http://senate.sdsu.edu/policy/policy\\_file.pdf](http://senate.sdsu.edu/policy/policy_file.pdf) or <http://senate.sdsu.edu/policy/pftoc.html>. See also <http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/srr/academics1.html>.

***Here is what students can expect from me:*** I will treat you with respect. I will know your name and treat you as an individual. I will prepare and monitor every class module with care. I will manage the class in a professional manner; that may include educating you or other students in appropriate

behavior. I will keep careful records of your on-line activity, performance, and progress. I will return your graded work quickly, with feedback, as appropriate. I will allow extensions or make-ups only for students with valid excuses that I have personally confirmed. I will pursue the maximum, policy-implicated punishment for plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of academic integrity. I will make myself available to you for advising. I will maintain appropriate confidentiality concerning your performance. I will provide you with professional support and write recommendations if appropriate. I will be honest with you. I will support your efforts at learning. *Your grade will reflect the quality of your work and nothing else.*



***Finally, please remember: This is an online course.*** Information technology or IT challenges can—and will—come up. Be prepared for them.

Please be assured that if and when problems occur on the SDSU end, you will not be penalized. However, when problems occur on your end, the story is different: **You are responsible for your computing needs;** student IT problems are not an acceptable excuse for non-completion of work. When problems occur on your end, you must fix them. You can **go to the Student Computing Center in Love Library for help; call (619) 594-3189; or email [scc@rohan.sdsu.edu](mailto:scc@rohan.sdsu.edu).** Unfortunately, I cannot provide IT support.

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## Learning Objectives & Outcomes

This course introduces students to ***systems thinking*** and the idea of ***adaptation*** and then explores, from the ‘systems’ standpoint, human adaptation to geography or the ‘natural’ environment, the ‘man made’ environment, and culture itself. In other words, **students examine the relationship between ‘the human experience’ and geographically, socially, and culturally-derived ‘environmental pressures’**. In this equation, health is a key index of adaptation and human groups are viewed as complex adaptive systems embedded within larger such systems and containing smaller ones. Knowledge of our organizational strategy and systems standpoint will help students to focus their efforts and attentions throughout the semester.

The overarching aim of the course is to help students understand and appreciate the synergistic relationship between culture and biology through a scientific, systems oriented examination of varied geographic and socio-cultural (including political economic) explanations for human bio-cultural diversity, past and present.

**Outcomes expected.**<sup>1</sup> Upon completing the course, students should be able to: *Apply systems thinking and a scientific perspective* in describing and explaining:

- Human biological adaptation;
- The adaptive emergence of culture and the global spread of behaviorally modern humans;
- How intensified subsistence strategies entailed diverse environmental changes that humans, in turn, adapted to in diverse ways.
- How local and global structural (political-economic) arrangements diversely affect human health.
- How culture differentially affects our expectations for, and experiences of, our bodies.

Students also will have built academic skills, for instance in information literacy and plagiarism avoidance, and they will have developed their peer review abilities.

**Specific outcomes expected and where to find them.** Section-specific learning outcome expectations are detailed in the *Lesson Schedule* (which exists as an appendix to this document). **They are repeated again at the start of each online lesson module.**

In addition to listing all course resources and activities (and relevant due dates) the Schedule also lists all key concepts and terms, and contains important calendar information. The Schedule therefore serves not only as an overall tool to help keep us on track but also as a **study guide** for the course as a whole.

Take some time now to have a look at the Schedule and to acquaint yourself with how it works. You should print out the Schedule (and this syllabus) for easy reference.

Please note that this course is not only an **upper division course** but it also serves as a **theory course** within the undergraduate anthropology degree. Therefore, you can expect to learn (and will be expected to be able to identify and describe) several anthropological theories during our time together.

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<sup>1</sup> **General Education parameters.** Course objectives were prepared in light of the university's criteria for cultural diversity courses in general education. Among other things, "The course must have a primary focus on non-dominant perspectives, cultures, views, and traditions." This course does so.

Further, ANTH 402 is a 3-unit *Explorations* course. Courses that fulfill the 9-unit [total] requirement for Explorations in General Education take the goals and skills of GE Foundations courses to a more advanced level. Your three upper division courses in Explorations will provide greater interdisciplinary, more complex and in-depth theory, deeper investigation of local problems, and wider awareness of global challenges. More extensive reading, written analysis involving complex comparisons, well-developed arguments, considerable bibliography, and use of technology are appropriate in many Explorations courses.

This is an Explorations course in *Natural Sciences*. Completing this course will help you learn to do the following with greater depth: 1) explain basic concepts and theories of the natural sciences; 2) use logic and scientific methods to analyze the natural world and solve problems; 3) argue from multiple perspectives about issues in natural science that have personal and global relevance; 4) use technology in laboratory and field situations to connect concepts and theories with real-world phenomena. [Please note that ANTH 402 support for #4 is generally conceptual rather than hands-on; nonetheless, concepts taught in this course will apply in your future lab and field experiences.]

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## Required Learning Resources (required readings/media)

'Learning Resources' for this course—the materials that you are *required* to read, view, etc.—include one book as well as numerous online readings, videos, and interactive Web sites. The book is: *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, by Tracy Kidder (Random House, 2004). This book is generally available at all bookstores, including the bookstore at SDSU. The book also is on reserve in the library.



**With the exception of the book, you will access all learning resources via Blackboard:** Each lesson module has a 'Learning Resources' section in Blackboard that includes clickable URLs for the required readings (etc.). There are a few readings located in Electronic Course Reserves, and to get to those you also will need to provide the course password, which is: *diversity*.

A full list of this course's learning resources and a list of supplementary texts is found under the 'Syllabus, Schedule, & Etc.' button on our Blackboard Website. All supplemental books are available in the SDSU library's course reserves.

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## Learning & Self-Assessment Activities

As you become familiar with our Blackboard Web site, you will come to see that, in each module, after the learning resources (readings, etc.) have been presented, there is a section called 'learning & self-assessment activities'. The activities section contains 'low stakes' activities such as ungraded or practice mini-quizzes that ask you to apply, practice, or otherwise demonstrate and self-assess what you have just learned. The aim of completing these activities is to gain practice and hone understanding so that you do as well as possible on the graded work you will submit (see below).

These activities do 'count' toward your final grade (see below) but rather than to grade them on some kind of ranked scale I will award points for completion (as long as a *good faith effort* has actually been demonstrated on your part). The learning activities work better that way as practice tasks to prepare you for success on the graded work.

**Each module's activities must be completed by midnight on Friday of the relevant week.** Points will only be given for activities completed on schedule.

**Online Office Hours.** Please plan to participate in online office hours (see p.1 for schedule).



Attendance is not required for online office hours; however, it is highly encouraged.

In our online meetings, I will address any questions you have about course

material (**good questions submitted beforehand will earn you extra credit**; for details, see Blackboard). I also will sometimes have planned activities to run through with you, to help deepen your comprehension of core concepts. The office hours will be archived so that if you miss them you may replay them at your convenience to see what went on.

In addition to online office hours, students may drop by for traditional office hour meetings during the week (see days/times on page 1). Consultations at other times, whether online, via phone, or face-to-face, also can be arranged by appointment, as needed, to support your performance in this class.

**E-mail:** To ensure that you can receive email from Blackboard, **make sure that your email address within the system is correct**. Some email systems block Blackboard mailings as if they are spam. Either fix this, or get an SDSU email account (go to: <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/newstudacct.shtml>.)

When sending me email, you must **include your first and last name in the subject line**. If you send email from outside of Blackboard, be sure to put the course name/number in the subject line too.

Email is often answered upon receipt. However, you must **allow for a 24-hour turnaround** (not including weekends). Email does sometimes go awry: If you do not hear back from me in due time, please try again with a different heading (in case the original was recognized as spam) and/or call me.

**Peer Groups.** It can be hard to feel connected to other students in an online course. Therefore, you will be assigned to a small peer group shortly after class begins. Group work per se is not required. However, each group can form a collaborative learning community and serve as a source of camaraderie and support. A 'student lounge' (discussion board forum) has been set up for each group to facilitate this.



Moreover, you will be doing some peer reviews for our two writing assignments; these **required** reviews will occur within the small group context. The writing assignment instruction documents have full details regarding how this will work.

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## Grades

Your final grade in the course is determined on the basis of **accrued or accumulated activity points (see above; worth 10%), a brief essay (10%), a longer report (20%), and five tests (60%)**. Although every student willing to engage her- or himself should do well, please remember that **this is an upper division course** and the workload is therefore heavier than you would find at the lower levels.





**All work, including tests, must be completed or submitted on time** to count toward your grade. Times as stated refer to San Diego or **Pacific Standard Time**. This is the time standard used by Blackboard's internal clock.

**A. Components of final grade.** Below, the four components of the final grade are listed. More general grading information is provided in the section that follows.

- 1. Learning & Self Assessment Activities (10%).** Activity points are awarded for activities completed, and accrued as the course progresses. Three-quarters of the activity points are awarded for activities found at the end of the modules. The remaining points will come from the peer review activities related to the writing assignments, described below.

With the exception of the peer reviews, the activities are worth one point each. Completing the activities is important because doing so prepares you to do well on tests and papers.

- 2. "Disputation Statement" Essay (10%).** Each student will write a 500-word statement defending a selected theoretical position relevant to our investigation of biocultural diversity. Detailed instructions for the essay, including due dates and the grading rubric<sup>2</sup>, is on our Blackboard Website.
- 3. Case Study Report (20%).** Each student will write a 1000-word case study report regarding a selected topic related directly to biocultural diversity. The reports will draw on course material, demonstrating explicitly that it has been mastered (for instance by correctly deploying vocabulary terms and theoretical concepts). Detailed instructions, including due dates and the grading rubric, is on our Blackboard Website.

***In regard to our writing assignments, please note:*** By taking this course, you agree that all required papers will be submitted for 'textual similarity review' to SafeAssign™ for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for review will be included as source documents in SDSU's SafeAssign™ institutional archive. You may remove personally identifying information from your paper prior to submission.

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<sup>2</sup> A rubric is a specific plan for point distribution and grade calculation. Use it in designing your statement.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and, **at a minimum, your course grade will be lowered 10%** if you engage in it (for instance, a B- will turn into a C-). Resources to help you avoid this are provided as part of our course. See also: <http://infodome.sdsu.edu/infolit/learningpackets.shtml#plagiarism>.

4. **Section Tests (60 %)**. Students will complete an online test at the end of every section of the course. The last section is a review section only: That section test is comprehensive or cumulative, covering key concepts used throughout the course. However, it is the same length as a typical section test, and worth the same proportion of the final grade.

Test #	Date (available 24 hours; noon-to-noon )	Percent of final grade
Test 1	9/11-12	12%
Test 2	9/25-26	12%
Test 3	10/16-17	12%
Test 4	11/13-14	12%
Test 5	12/4-5	12%
Test 6	12/11 – 12/12	12%

Please note that the first two tests come quickly. This is partly so that students have time to get used to the testing system before we are too far along. Moreover, later, students also will be engaged in writing assignments (see above); the longer gap between tests 3, 4, and 5 allows for that.

Test values and 'window frame' dates are indicated in the table above. The lowest test grade will be dropped so that tests will account, in total, for 60% of your final grade. However, **every test must be taken. No test may be skipped.**

Tests consist mainly of multiple choice questions but you also may find fill-in, matching, and very short answer or brief essay questions. Questions directly reflect (are written based on) our specified **learning outcome objectives**, the topics/terms found at the start of each module, and the questions provided to you for *Mountains Beyond Mountains*.

Although you can certainly access your notes and our learning resources while taking each test, the **tests are not intended to be open book exams**. Approach our tests just like you would approach an exam you might take sitting in a classroom. In other words, 'know your stuff'. **Any student who cheats will receive an F for the course.**

On each test, **each student will receive a randomly generated subset of questions drawn from a large pool of questions**, so that no two tests are alike. While you therefore will not be asked about every single topic and term, the questions you do receive 'spot check' your comprehension and thereby provide us with an excellent measure of your total grasp of all course materials / objectives.

**Test dates and times:** This is an online course, but we still will adhere to university standards for ensuring academic integrity. For this reason, tests will be 'open' for the **24-hour period or window extending from 12:00 noon on Friday until 12:00 noon on Saturday**. Please clear your calendars now to ensure that you are available for every test.

Although you may begin testing any time within the testing window, you will receive a set number of minutes to complete the test once you have opened it, and tests must be completed in one sitting. Blackboard provides you with a test timer, which starts when you begin a test. The timer does not stop your test when your time runs out. However, Blackboard does not grade tests submitted after time runs out. Unfortunately, then, **any test-taker who takes more than his or her share of time will receive an 'F'** for the effort.

**Crashed tests.** This is an online course. Technology problems can and will arise. Now and then, they arise during testing. Having said that, there are steps you can take to ensure against this. The course has a number of practice tests built in to occur prior to your first 'real' test and so you will have ample time to troubleshoot. **You are expected to have all anticipatable technological problems sorted out prior to the first 'real' test.**

If your test crashes for unanticipated reasons, **let me know right away** through an email to [esobo@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:esobo@mail.sdsu.edu). After you've emailed, check back regularly for my response. Do not abandon the test or your email. Wait for my instructions. And remember, although I can reset a crashed test for you, **I do need ample notice** to do so.

Furthermore, although I may 'reset' crashed tests for retaking, the decision to do so is at my discretion. The circumstances in which a given test crashes will be taken into account as I decide on the appropriate course of action.

Finally, please note: the Blackboard system is busiest in the hour prior to any deadline. It can even lock up and lock you out. So do not wait until the last minute or even the last few hours to take your test.

**Missed tests (make-ups):** Because tests are taken online and because your lowest test grade will be dropped, make-ups will *only* be permitted in the *direst* of unexpected and unanticipated circumstances (e.g., hospitalization, extradition), provided that appropriate and legitimate documentation has been supplied. In other words, **take all of your tests when they are due.**

Accommodations for religious observances must be cleared at least two weeks prior to the holiday in question, as per SDSU's religious observance policy.

**Test grading.** Blackboard scores answers to ‘objective’ questions upon test submission; other types of answers are scored by hand. Once a point score is derived, each test’s point score is converted to a percentage by dividing the points earned by the total possible points available (i.e., the number that could have been earned; the perfect score). Letter grades are derived from that percentage. So, for example, a student who earns 30 points on a 40 point test, or 75% of the points available, earns a C on that test. By the way, if you are taking the course C/NC, please be aware that the university considers a C- (C minus) as a NC (no credit) or failing grade.

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade points
0-59.9 %	F	0
60-63.9 %	D-	0.7
64-66.9 %	D	1
67-69.9 %	D+	1.3
70-73.9 %	C-	1.7
74-76.9 %	C	2
77-79.9 %	C+	2.3
80-83.9 %	B-	2.7
84-86.9 %	B	3
87-89.9 %	B+	3.3
90-93.9 %	A-	3.7
94-96.9 %	A	4
97-100 %	A+	4

## B. Results

**Grade calculations.** All scores in this course are converted to percentages. The table here shows how we move from a percentage to a letter grade and then a grade point figure. *This process is applied not only to the tests, projects, and accrued activity point totals but to the final grade as a whole.* Please be advised that we do not automatically round up (e.g., 79.5% = C+ while 80% = B-).

With the percentage system, as opposed to the curve system, it is possible for every student who knows the material to earn an A. However, I reserve the right to alter the grading method on the off chance that the percentage system is not adequately differentiating students.

**Grade posting and feedback.** Grades are posted on Blackboard as soon as they are available. Grades on tests that are scored and graded automatically by Blackboard are posted as soon as they are taken. However, when tests include written or hand-marked answers, and for other types of assignments (e.g., your essays), the process can take a few days; it may even take a week or two depending on enrollment.

While Blackboard provides you with scores it does not provide you with data on which questions you missed or why. We can discuss assessed work (or any other work) during office hours or in private consultation. Contact me any time that you want more feedback or coaching.

**Grade queries.** Grades are very carefully determined and checked prior to being accepted into or entered in the Grade Book record. I take assessment of student performance very seriously and would rather we ‘get it right the first time’ than rush and make errors. But if you do find an error or have a question, please feel free to ask about it. It pleases me greatly to raise grades when warranted. On the flip side, it annoys me terribly when students push for points when they are not warranted; this is disrespectful to me, your fellow students, and yourself—so please avoid it. Reconsideration, if requested, will take your entire test and, in some cases, your entire record into account and may result in lower as well as higher grades.

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## General Roadmap for our Journey

The overarching aim of the course is to help students *understand and appreciate the synergistic relationship between culture and biology through a scientific, systems oriented examination of varied geographic and socio-cultural (including political economic) explanations for human bio-cultural diversity, past and present.*



To begin our learning journey, after reviewing the syllabus and schedule, and getting to know our Blackboard Website, we are introduced to anthropology, and to the scientific method. We examine and adopt the ‘systems’ approach, which we will apply in all subsequent lessons.

Next, we focus on the processes entailed in adaptation. We investigate the links between geography and the rise of human biological diversity. Culture’s emergence as an adaptive mechanism is explored. The material covered highlights the important role of the physical (‘natural’, geographic) environment. As we will see, however, the ‘environment’ is an increasingly human creation.

We then examine humanity’s impact on the environment in regard to inter- and intra-societal variations in health and wellness. We investigate the varied relationships between ‘man-made’ environments (e.g., those created by intensified subsistence strategies, social evolution, regional/global linkages) and health. We examine the role of disease ecology in explaining diverse epidemiological profiles as well as the varied effects of political economy and other expressions of power and hierarchy (e.g., structural violence).

Finally, we explore the importance of cultural context and also of cultural relativism. We will examine how even experiences as apparently basic and universal as family-building can be experienced in bio-culturally diverse ways. This understanding is extended as we explore the literal embodiment of culture, for example in bodily size, shape, and decoration.

As the course progresses, we learn more and more about bio-cultural diversity’s origins and its relationship to every-day life in today’s world. Detailed learning outcome expectations as well as work requirements and relevant due dates are provided in the Appendix to this syllabus. The Appendix serves as the lesson-by-lesson guide for our journey (which I look forward to sharing with you!).