

Success Stories:

Profiles of Pearson Technology Users

MyAnthroLab

An interview with
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Course Information

I use MyAnthroLab in the course ANTH 2203: Peoples of the World, a large Intro to Cultural Anthropology course that fulfills a general education requirement in non-Western cultures. This three-credit course is taught as a traditional lecture class, capped at 75 students. A diverse group of students takes this course—both Anthropology majors and non-majors, primarily freshmen and sophomores.

The main theme of this course is cultural relativism. I want students to develop an appreciation for cultural diversity—to look at the world differently and to think of the ways in which categories like gender, family, and race are socially constructed rather than givens in the world. Every lesson and lecture is designed to prompt students to think about understanding cultural practices in context, to think about these categories as social constructs, and to look at their own cultural worlds in new ways.

Assessment

Two exams count for 33% of the final grade. A final exam counts for 20% of the final grade.

For homework, students must answer a weekly essay question on MyAnthroLab, related to the chapter we are working on. These are submitted online and count for 16% of the final grade.

I assign one mini-ethnography paper towards the end of the semester. Students can perform an observation about behavior in a public space on campus (fraternity party, dorms, cafeteria), or visit a toy store to analyze and observe how gender roles are socialized through toys. This is worth 14% of the final grade. The textbook has several chapters on kinship, family, and gender, so by the time they are doing this assignment, they have already answered an essay question on MyAnthroLab about how gender is a social construct. This assignment prompts students to apply that idea, and to think about it ethnographically through their observations.

Fall, 2010 was the first time I used MyAnthroLab. Because I had really cut back on the amount of reading I was assigning, I wanted to include participation in MyAnthroLab as part of the final grade. I assessed the extent to which students logged on and utilized all of the assessments and additional resources in MyAnthroLab. I wanted to reward the students who were using MyAnthroLab extensively and simultaneously penalize the students who were not engaging with it, as I would a student who comes to class but never participates in class discussion. In fall, 2010, I counted participation in class discussion and use of MyAnthroLab as 17% of the final grade.

Implementation

I chose to use MyAnthroLab, first, because I was really impressed with Barbara Miller's textbook *Cultural Anthropology in a Globalizing World*. I like that the Miller textbook emphasizes globalization and I like its approach to key topics such as family, kinship, and religion.

When I saw MyAnthroLab with the textbook, it caught my attention. I am a visual anthropologist, as well as a visual learner, and I know students respond well to multimedia. I want to get students interested in thinking about the world differently. Explaining the concepts of cultural relativism and appreciation of cultural diversity through multimedia seems to be more effective than assigning 300 pages of an ethnography that only a handful of them will read. I see MyAnthroLab as another set of readings or resources for the students.

Benefits

As a professor, I am always striving to find ways to engage with current topics in anthropology, and to bring anthropological concepts to life for students through video clips, news stories, photo slideshows, and radio pieces. Theoretical concepts in anthropology can be abstract, but a short video clip or radio story from MyAnthroLab can really illustrate these theoretical issues and bring them to life for the students.

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MyAnthroLab is an incredible resource, both for students and faculty members. There are images, maps, radio stories, and short videos for every chapter. MyAnthroLab has saved me class prep time by providing a multimedia library organized by chapter and theme. I especially love all the NPR stories. You can very easily find a story to fit to a particular class topic.

At the time of the first exam this past semester, a lot of the students had not yet started using MyAnthroLab. The average score on the first exam was 72%. I had been using the test bank straight from MyAnthroLab and told my class I was disappointed with their grades. After I encouraged my students to start using MyAnthroLab to prepare for their tests, the average score on their second exam went up to 84%! Students were able to see a real benefit in terms of their performance in the class, and for the rest of the semester, they were actively using MyAnthroLab. MyAnthroLab provides good study tools for the students, particularly the flashcards and the ability to take all of the different exams on each chapter. This is really valuable, because it relieves a lot of the anxiety that students have around taking exams. Because students use MyAnthroLab to study, they know what to expect on their tests.

At some point, some of our department's classes will be taught online. I would definitely be more comfortable teaching an online class with a resource like MyAnthroLab.