UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON -- NEW COURSE PROPOSAL
Electronically submit this completed form with PDF attachments to the Chair of the College Curriculum Committee.

COLLEGE (check one):  Arts and Sciences  X  Business  Education

Proposal Submitted By: Laura Mentore  Date Prepared: September 14, 2012
Course Title:  Amazonian Societies
Department/discipline and course number*:  SOAN/Anthropology: Anth 350

*This course number must be approved by the Office of the Registrar before the proposal is submitted.

Number of credits proposed:  3  Prerequisites:  ANTH 101, and 200 or higher level ANTH course or POI

Will this be a new, repeatable "special topics" course? (Do you want students to be able to take this new course more than once if the topic changes?)  NO  X  YES

Date of first offering of this new course:  FALL SEMESTER, year 2013

Proposed frequency of offering of the course:  Every year, or every other year at the least
List the faculty who will likely teach the course:  Laura Mentore

Are ANY new resources required?  NO  X  YES  Document in attached impact statement

This new course will be (check all that apply):  Required in the major  General Elective  X
Elective in the major  X  General Education**

**AFTER the new course is approved, a separate proposal must be sent to the General Education Committee.

Catalog Description:  In-depth study of ethnographic literature on Amazonian societies, including kinship, economics, politics, gender, shamanism and other main themes. Western preconceptions about humanity, power and morality are put in comparative context alongside indigenous theories.

COURSE HISTORY
Was this course taught previously as a topics or experimental course?  YES  X  NO

Course Number and Title of Previous Course  Semester Offered  Enrollment
Anth 371EE: Amazonian Societies  Spring 2012, Fall 2012  28,14

X  CHECK HERE if the proposed course is to be equated with the earlier topics or experimental offerings. This means that students who took the earlier "topics" course will only be able to take the new course if they made a C- grade or lower in the earlier course.

NOTE: If the proposed course has not been previously offered as a topics or experimental course, explain in the attached rationale statement why the course should be adopted even though it has not been tried out.

REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS:
1. Rationale Statement (Why is this course needed? What purposes will it serve?)
2. Impact Statement (Provide details about the Library, space, budget, and technology impacts created by adding this new course. Include supporting statements from the Library, IT Department, etc. as needed.)
3. Sample Syllabus

Department Chair Approval:  Debra Schleef  Date:  9/14/12

CCC Chair Approval:  Bradley Hansen  Date:  10/20/12

UCC Chair Approval:  Date:  

New Course Proposal Cover Sheet (July 2012)
**Rationale Statement for ANTH 350: Amazonian Societies**

This course makes a significant contribution to the current course offerings in anthropology through its unique focus on the peoples and cultures of lowland South America. Most other courses in the Anthropology program are based around a topic or theoretical concentration, and then examine the topic from a cross-cultural perspective (e.g. the topic of gender and how gender roles differ from one culture to the next). This course deploys the opposite approach, covering a broad spectrum of topics and theoretical genres through a sustained focus on a particular geographic and cultural area. In the process, students acquire not only a more in-depth understanding of the indigenous societies of Amazonia, but anthropology itself as it has unfolded through the decades of scholarship on the region. To put it another way, because of the unique place that Amazonia occupies in the Western imagination, this course has the potential to pull students into readings and discussions that inadvertently teach them as much about their own culture and the discipline of anthropology as they satiate their appetite for the distant and different. Because this course is heavily informed by Laura Mentore’s own ongoing research in northeastern Amazonia, it provides students a measure of insight into the realities of fieldwork, and more generally, the process of bringing one’s research into relation with theory. The course was taught in Spring 2012 and Fall 2012 as Anth 371: Special Topics. I plan to offer it every fall, or at least every other fall when that proves unfeasible.

*This course will be a prerequisite for the study abroad program: Ethnographic Field Methods in Guyana.*
AMAZONIAN SOCIETIES

Course Instructor: Dr. Laura Mentore (lmentore@umw.edu)
Class Schedule: Tu/Th 12:30-1:45 in Monroe 115
Office: Monroe 410
Office Hours: Tu/Th 9-11am and by appointment

Course Description

“Amazonia” -- the word, the place, the people, the symbolic icon -- is a product of over 500 years of contact between Europe and the Americas. In fact, it is only through the Western imagination that the region of lowland South America and its diverse inhabitants have come to be known respectively as “Amazonia” and “Amazonian peoples”. Whether depicted as “noble savages”, “lazy Indians”, “Utopian societies”, “filthy cannibals”, “lost souls” or “custodians of the world’s last rainforests”, Amazonian peoples are continually imagined by the West in terms of an extreme alterity or Otherness. Popular stereotypes of Amazonian peoples as isolated and primitive are increasingly being challenged by their participation in national governments, the global economy and international human rights forums. Yet in many ways, the news media, the film industry, governments, NGOs, and foreign researchers continue to reinforce and capitalize upon problematic images of Amazonia.

In this course, we will critically analyze the complex interplay between the Western imagination and Amazonia, with ethnographic studies of indigenous societies as our primary source. We will consider how anthropology produces, reinforces and/or deconstructs various genres of knowledge about the region and its inhabitants. Through readings and discussion, we will examine how indigenous theories of humanity, nature and society have been interpreted in anthropology. We will also examine how these indigenous theories contribute to broad philosophical questions and global challenges. The course is organized around a series of themes of enduring theoretical importance in anthropology, including personhood, exchange, gender, belief systems, leadership and the environment. Ultimately, the ethnographies of Amazonia challenge many of the ideas that we take for granted in academia and in our society in general, for example: the autonomous individual, the state, the “naturalness” of competing for wealth, the privileging of reason over morality, and society as a force that dominates and controls nature.
Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Identify, describe and compare main features of various Amazonian societies
- Articulate an understanding of major themes and debates in the anthropology of Amazonia (both in writing and discussion)
- Understand the difference between ethnography and theory, and critically examine how they relate to each other in the anthropology of Amazonia
- Develop a more critical understanding of Western (Euro-American) cultural assumptions about power, alterity, subjectivity, the soul, and nature through an increased familiarity with alternative, Amazonian perspectives on the world.
- Recognize the invaluable contributions of indigenous knowledge and practices to anthropology, philosophy, and the sciences while also recognizing the ethical dilemmas of exchanging/appropriating knowledge across cultures
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of ways in which Amazonian peoples, environments and materials are involved in global political, economic and environmental processes

Graded Assignments

Attendance, Discussion, Meaningful Participation: 20%
Essay 1 (1500-2000 words): 25%
Essay 2 (1500-2000 words): 25%
Final Written Exam (cumulative): 30%

You are expected to follow the UMW honor code on all assignments. Please review the honor code handbook online at:

Ignorance of what constitutes an Honor Code violation cannot be used as a defense in an honor hearing. Please include the honor pledge and signature on all of your assignments.

There is no provision for “extra credit” in this course.

1. Attendance, Meaningful Participation, Discussions (20%)
Attendance of all classes is a course requirement. Should you miss a class due to illness, you will need to provide a note from your health provider in order for the absence to be excused. You are required to complete all assigned readings before class on the day for which they are assigned. Class time will largely consist of discussions, either as a class or in smaller groups. In order for class...
time to be productive and interesting, you will need to come prepared to discuss
the readings, ask questions, and express your viewpoint on various topics and
debates. Generally, I will open the discussions and may expand upon the
readings, but this class will not be formatted as a lecture.

Keeping up with the assigned readings is crucial, not only for your grade but for
the overall success of the course. Because this is a small, upper-level class, you
will be given a good deal of responsibility and freedom as far as choosing
discussion topics and deciding which topics you are most interested in focusing
on. The idea is to allow you to have input on the content and focus of this course
so that you gain something meaningful from it.

Meaningful participation is not the same as skimming through the readings and
coming to class. You will need to (1) take notes on the readings while you are
doing them in addition to taking notes during class (2) formulate critical
questions about the day’s reading before coming to class (3) constantly seek to
draw out the similarities and differences between the different readings and
discussion topics (4) seek out the connections between different aspects of
Amazonian practices and beliefs in order to formulate a more holistic
understanding of Amazonian sociality and (5) make connections between
what we cover in this class, broader issues in anthropology, and broader issues in
the world around you.

On all the materials we will cover, there is a wide range of legitimate and
compelling viewpoints that can be argued for or against. You are encouraged to
share your own interpretations of and problems with the readings. The extent to
which you do this will factor into your attendance/participation grade and will also
help you in the written components of the course.

All students will be assigned a class day for which will “lead” the discussion,
possibly along with one other student. You will not be expected to give a formal
presentation, but rather, provide a loose summary of the reading and relevant
topics and guide the rest of the class through a group discussion by posing
questions, talking points, etc. This will factor into your attendance/participation
grade.

*This class will be a safe space for respectfully listening to, trying to understand,
and challenging each other’s viewpoints and opinions—on Amazonia,
anthropology and whatever else we end up discussing.

2. Two 1500–2000 word Essays (25% each)
For the two essay assignments, you will be given a list of several essay topics
from which to choose, approximately one week prior to the due date. Essay
topics will focus on one or more of the readings and class discussions. Further
information and guidelines on the essays will be provided closer to the date. Generally, in the essays, you will be expected to do the following:

- Formulate your own thesis argument (educated and informed opinion) in relation to the topic. This should be clearly stated in summarized form at the beginning of your essay and then further explicated (unpacked and argued for) throughout the essay.

- Provide a summary of main ideas covered in the readings that you are engaging in your essay.

- Demonstrate your command of the relevant theoretical issues/positions covered in your essay topic.

- Demonstrate critical thinking. In other words, your essay will need to be more than a review of the literature and class lectures. You will need to develop an argument of your own in relation to these materials and follow it through to a logical conclusion.

- Include a comparative component. This could entail an analysis of multiple readings on a particular theme or a comparison of an author’s viewpoint with your own viewpoint or a viewpoint developed in class discussions.

Your essay will need to include proper citations of literature. You may cite additional literature beyond the assigned readings for this course, but you will need to make it clear how/why it is relevant. If you wish to include outside sources, it is advised that you discuss this with me beforehand. I will not read or provide feedback on draft essays, but you are encouraged to discuss your essay with me before the due date, either during office hours or through email.

3. Final Exam (30%)
The final exam will be held during the two-hour time slot for this course as listed on the UMW exam schedule. The exam will be cumulative, i.e. you will need to review all materials covered throughout the entire semester. It will be a written “blue book” final, consisting of responses to essay-style questions. You will be graded on the content, depth, coherency, and length of your responses. Your responses should demonstrate a grasp of the ethnography of Amazonia as well as the broader themes and issues covered during the semester. We will discuss the format of the final exam in more detail closer to the end of the semester.

Grading Scale

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Minimum Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>69-65</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>below 55</td>
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New Course Proposal Cover Sheet (July 2012)
Online Resources

The following websites are useful sources. This instructor does not necessarily endorse any of the views or objectives they express

The Society for Anthropology of Lowland South America  
http://www.salsa-tipiti.org

Instituto Socioambiental (Brazil)  
http://www.socioambiental.org/home_html

Museu do Indio, Brazil  
http://www.museudoindio.org.br/

Museu Nacional, UFRJ  
http://acd.ufri.br/museu/

Amazon Press- Amazon Revista  
http://www.amazonpress.com.br

Cultural Survival  
http://www.culturalsurvival.org/

The Amerindian Peoples Association of Guyana  
http://www.sdnp.org.gy/apa/

Reading Schedule

* All course readings will be available on Canvas unless otherwise specified  
** Readings are subject to change. You will be given advance notice of any changes through email and/or in class

Tuesday, August 28  
Introductions and review of syllabus

Thursday, August 30  

Tuesday, September 4  
Overing, Joanna: “Review Article”  
Riviere, Peter: “Individual and Society in Guiana”

Thursday, September 6  
Clastres, Pierre: Chronicle of the Guayaki...
Tuesday, September 11
Clastres, Pierre: Chronicle of the Guayaki...

Thursday, September 13
Clastres, Pierre: Chronicle of the Guayaki...

Tuesday, September 18
Clastres, Pierre: Chronicle of the Guayaki

Thursday, September 20
Clastres, Pierre: Society Against the State...

Tuesday, September 25
Clastres, Pierre: Society Against the State...

Thursday, September 27
Clastres, Pierre: Society Against the State...
*Essay One: Topics Handed Out

Tuesday, October 2
Seeger, Antony: “The Meaning of Body Ornaments: A Suya Example”
*Essay One DUE

Thursday, October 4

Tuesday, October 9
Overing and Passes: Love and Anger...

Thursday, October 11
Overing and Passes: Love and Anger...

Tuesday, October 16
NO CLASS- FALL BREAK

Thursday, October 18
Overing and Passes: Love and Anger...

Tuesday, October 23
Overing and Passes: Love and Anger...

Thursday, October 25
Arhem, Kaj: “The Cosmic Food Web: human-nature relatedness in the Northwest Amazon”

**Tuesday, October 30**

**Thursday, November 1**
Vilaca, Aparecida: “Chronically Unstable Bodies”  
*Essay Two: Topics Handed Out*

**Tuesday, November 6**
Conklin, Beth and Morgan, Lynn: “Babies, Bodies, and the Production of Personhood in North America and a Native Amazonian Society  
*Essay Two DUE*

**Thursday, November 8**
McCallum, Cecilia: “Ritual and the Origin of Sexuality in the Alto Xingu” in *Sex and Violence: Issues of Representation and Experience* (Harvey, Penelope and Gow, Peter, eds.)

**Tuesday, November 13**

**Thursday, November 15**
Gow, Peter: “Forgetting Conversion: the Summer Institute of Linguistics Mission in the Piro Lived World”

**Tuesday, November 20**

**Thursday, November 22**
*No Class- Thanksgiving Break*

**Tuesday, November 27**

**Thursday, November 29**

New Course Proposal Cover Sheet (July 2012)
Mentore, Laura: "Waiwai fractality and the arboreal bias of PES schemes in Guyana: What to make of the multiplicity of Amazonian cosmographies? (Journal of Cultural Geography, 28:1, pp. 21-43)

**Tuesday, December 4**
Review for Final Exam

**Thursday, December 6**
Review for Final Exam