

FYE 101: 28N**Introduction to Intellectual & Creative Inquiry**

Instructor: Dr. Kathleen N. Skoczen, Anthropology

Office: EN C-027

Phone: 392-5679

E-mail: skoczenk1@southernct.edu

Office Hours: Mondays, Wednesday, 9-11 Tuesdays 12-1p and by appointment

Freshman Year Experience: A description

Among the Maasai of East Africa young men in early adolescence begin their initiation into manhood by being isolated from their village. The first stage (initiation) in this rite of passage begins with circumcision whereby young men prove their bravery by not shedding a tear, nor making a sound. They are taken to *manyatas*, warrior villages, on the perimeter of their communities where they spend years (up to 20) with other “warriors” in a liminal phase, neither young boys nor truly men. During this strictly disciplined phase they are learning how to protect and raid for cattle, their most important commodity. They learn the geography of the region, subtle environmental and climatic indicators, and the intimate behaviors and quirks of the wildlife in the region. They are marked as distinct from the rest of society; their hair is left to grow into long braids, they carry their spears and shields, they sometimes put red ochre on their face and bodies, observe strict taboos and wear clothes that signify their tribe. They are forbidden from entering the village and young flirtatious girls serve as their liaisons, although they are known to sneak in from time to time to visit their lovers. During the liminal stage they experience “*communitas*” whereby they bond with all Maasai Warriors (from across their nation) in their age grade who come together for rituals, reinforcing what it means to be “Maasai”. In the final stage of this rite of passage to adulthood, they go through a ceremony called *eunoto*, an event that is heavily celebrated by the whole society, particularly by mothers. This is the culmination of everything wonderful about Maasai society, bringing the youth into adulthood to lead the nation. The men, now wise with age and experience re-enter society, they are “re-incorporated” or reborn into Maasai culture as celebrated adults. They are now allowed to marry, they set up a home and take on their inheritance in the form of a young herd of cattle and begin to practice all they have learned about their world and how to manage it.

Maasai girls begin their initiation with menarche. As young women become fertile, and all property is owned by men, they need to be quickly tied to a husband. The warriors, now turned adults, will be among the men their parents arrange for them to marry. The young girl is removed from her social circles, secluded to a hut and circumcised. She spends a prescribed number of days with adult women who teach her the secrets of womanhood. The girl is then dressed in the finest attire and jewelry, now inheriting beautiful necklaces, earrings, bracelets, etc., from the women of her village. She represents all that is good with the world, a young woman about to reproduce Maasai culture for the future. She is taken to her husband’s village, whereby the women of this new village shout horrendous insults, “your husband has no cows only pumpkins”. This hazing ritual, a condensed liminal phase, provokes all the fears and sadness of the young woman to the surface. She cries as her mother-in-law alternately heaps insults then protective curses at the other women.

The young bride is vulnerable and isolated in this new space, and slowly comes to see these women as her primary support. Her marriage ceremony lasts nine days during which she is taken to visit first her father-in-law, an essential ritual, as he will provide her with the foundation of her (husband's) herd of cattle from which she will grow the wealth to support her children. The bride then visits other members of the village who are obliged to give her (husband) presents of cattle to increase the potential of the herd. After nine days she will take up residence and begin the process of raising a large family and milking and caring for the cows of her husband's herd, which one day will be presents to her daughters-in-law, that is, if she is a success.

Among the Plains Indians of North America, young men (and among some tribes women who elect to choose the path of a warrior) are isolated from the community into the wilderness. There he is expected to fast and bond with the natural elements until he has a vision. The spirit who comes to him during this vision is then his guardian spirit; he is now an adult and ready to return and serve his society.

Among the Australian Aborigines, a mourning song is heard when all the adolescent young men are rounded up and leave the village during this initiation phase of their rite of passage to adulthood. Girls, too, are taken away separately through a ritual mourning as they are secluded to their own camps far from their homes. Groups of adolescent boys and girls (separately) spend a prescribed number of days away from the village learning the secret lore of their society (and sex) during this prolonged liminal phase. Elders imbue them with the knowledge and wisdom of the generations that preceded them. Boys are circumcised; girls are given the secrets of motherhood. They are often painted in mud and forced to lay still as if dead. Upon completion of this crash course in Aborigine culture, the young people are returned to the village with new names and new identities.

The rite of passage to adulthood is practiced in cultures throughout the world. It is a period of high anxiety; a dangerous time fraught with risk and uncertainty. Are the youth mature enough to take on the responsibilities and burdens of adulthood? Are the challenges that lay ahead too burdensome or have we, as a society, raised youth who are ready to embrace the trials and tribulations, as well as the joys and celebrations that lay ahead? Can they take us into the future in a better position to deal with whatever it holds?

The rite of passage into American society may seem less exotic to you. Nonetheless, in the last month you have been removed from your "village" and taken to a new and strange place. Elders (that would be me) are here to imbue you with the wisdom and knowledge of our society in a crash course that lasts ... um... four years. During this sacred phase the elders will be sharing our tools and secrets to help you once you leave our initiation huts (the university). During this time you are betwixt and between as anthropologists like to say. You are in a dangerous but wonderful stage of your life. You are no longer a child, but not truly an adult. By all measures, and across almost all societies in the world, this celebrated stage of life is treated carefully: you hold the potential of our future. Time, but also mastering the tools of adulthood, determine when you are ready to re-enter the mundane, normal world of American society. Your re-incorporation into society, like cultures throughout the world, is marked by a special ceremony (called graduation) and you, too, are reborn with a new identity. No longer a son or a daughter, but now a young adult, perhaps with a new title (teacher, nurse, doctor, accountant) you are ready to embark on a career, enter into new, more mature relationships and take on the responsibilities of participating and sometimes running our

democratic society. This course is the initiation into your liminal phase that sets you on your path to adulthood. Let's get started!

Academically speaking, FYE 101 introduces students to the academic and interpersonal skills and experiences necessary to become committed, competent, responsible, successful, and engaged learners. This course helps students become more familiar with *what* we do at the university, as well as offer them many occasions to explore *why* and *how* we do these things.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will contribute to and become engaged in learning communities by **taking responsibility** for their own education.
- Students will learn how to navigate the University and **access both academic and social supports**.
- Students will learn the **connectedness** between their general education courses, academic majors and personal and professional development.
- Students will develop an **understanding of education in cultural contexts**, both local and global.
- Students will investigate theories of learning in order to **identify their own learning styles**, as well as the variety of learning and teaching styles of others, including peers and teachers.
- Students will **use inquiry-based learning** to investigate an issue, reflect upon it, and form and defend a position.
- Students will use reading, writing, and speaking as a way to **develop critical thinking**, as well as a way to **effectively communicate** ideas to others.
- Students will become **familiar with the array of information resources** available, as well as gain an understanding of the research process.
- Students will **participate in co-curricular, community-based opportunities** offered by the University and **gain an understanding of the importance of these opportunities** in relation to their educational goals and personal development.
- Students will **explore issues of diversity and approaches to advancing social justice**.
- Students will learn the **importance of wellness in promoting, maintaining and enhancing the learning process**.

Required Materials

- ▣ Nathan, Rebecca, *My Freshman Year, What a Professor Learning by Becoming a Student*. Penguin Books 2005.
- ▣ Postman, Neil, *The End of Education, Redefining the Value of School*. Vintage Books 1995.
- ▣ Graff, Gerald & Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say, The Moves that Matter in Persuasive Writing*. WW Norton & Company 2007
- ▣ Handouts in class
- ▣ Organized system for a portfolio (can be a 3 ring notebook, a binder, a sturdy folder, but something where you can keep your work together in a neat and accessible format)
- ▣ College dictionary/thesaurus
- ▣ Weekly or Monthly Calendar or Date Book
- ▣ SCSU Catalogue

- ▣ SCSU Schedule of Classes
- ▣ SCSU Student Handbook

Requirements:

- ▣ **Journal Entries** **10pts**
 - **Midterm Portfolio** **10pts**
 - **Final Portfolio** **10pts**
- ▣ **Mapping/Documenting Campus** **10pts**
- ▣ **Co-Curricular Activities (5 @ 5pts)** **25 pts**
- ▣ **Interview – Senior/Upperclassman/Foreign Nat.** **15pts**
 - **Presentation and report**
- ▣ **Individual Research Project** **20pts**
 - **Presentation and report**

Assignments:

▣ **Journal Entries total of 30 points:**

Students are required to read and reflect on the chapters or handouts as directed by the professor. Journals are due every Monday and will guide class discussion around the readings and activities of the week before. Generally, journal entries should be based on readings, but also the activities of the week before. The entries should be typed and entered into a portfolio that the student keeps together. We will be sharing these entries with other class members for evaluation and reflection; please keep very personal observations to a minimum.

Portfolios: Portfolio grades (20 of the 30 points) include not only evaluations of your journal entries, but also the collection of all materials from the class. The mid-term and final grade is based on an evaluation of your overall progress in class as demonstrated through your portfolio.

▣ **Mapping/Documenting Campus 10pts:**

Working in teams of two, students will be assigned an area of campus to explore. They will “map” out this area and document the offices, services, access, and any other pertinent details that can be found.

▣ **Co-Curricular Activities 5 for a total of 25 pts.**

Students will attend 5 events throughout the semester and write a 3 page summary of the event. Please include a detailed description of the event, why the event was held, who sponsored the event, who attended the event, and what you learned or experienced. Events are listed in the course outline, but other events will be added throughout the semester.

▣ **Interview – Senior/Upperclassman/Foreign Nat. Presentation and report 15pts**

This assignment will be discussed in class at length. Following ethics outlined in Nathan’s book and discussed in class, students will identify and interview an upperclassmen (preferably a Senior outside your major) or a foreign exchange student. We will construct a

questionnaire together in class. Students will hand in a report of their interview. Details on the assignment will be given in class. Each student will present a summary of their findings to the class.

- ▣ **Individual Research Project Presentation and report: Ethnography 20pts**
Students are required to choose from a list a group with whom they will do “fieldwork”, that is participant-observation (ala Rebecca Nathan, but not under-cover). Details of this assignment will be given in class. Presentations of this assignment will be presented during the final exam.

- ▣ (Not graded) Completion of self-assessments, which will help the instructor assess what students are learning in the course and help the university assess how well the FYE model is working to achieve its objectives. The SCSU Office of Assessment and Planning will enter and store the data for all students’ self-assessments. The same Office may track the progress of the whole incoming class of first-year students through their years at SCSU and two years after graduation. Improvement of the university experience of students will be the only use to which student self-assessment data will be applied. In this way, both current and future students will benefit. Because of the potential for having data tracked, students are asked to write their student ID number on the self-assessments. The self-assessments are confidential. Only the instructor will have access to them. The Office will not report on individual students’ responses, but will group the responses from the whole incoming class of first-year students together for analysis. At any time, including the first entry into the tracking data file, students may request that the Office of Assessment and Planning remove their self-assessments from their analysis files. This may be done by sending an e-mail to assessment@southernct.edu. If no requests are received from a student, it will be assumed that said students have given his or her consent to use the data as described.

Student participation: Reading assignments are to be completed before the day/week indicated on the course schedule. You should come prepared to class with questions about the readings and able to discuss important points made in the readings. Take notes as you read and feel free to enter these into your journals! It makes writing assignments much easier! Regular attendance is required to do well in this course. I will be deducting 3 points off of your total score for every absence after the first two. Late arrivals and early departures are counted as absences. We have 50 minutes in class; I expect you there, alert and attentive. **Turn off your cell phones/pagers before entering class!!!** It is the lunch hour; if you bring drinks or snacks please clean up after yourself.

****ACADEMIC HONESTY****

Plagiarism and cheating constitute academic misconduct and will not be tolerated! **Plagiarism** is the use of other people’s words and/or ideas without properly citing their source. It also includes the use of other **students’** ideas and words, as well as those of scholars. While I encourage students to work in groups to study and discuss ideas about this course, **ALL** of the assignments, quizzes and exams you complete for this class **MUST BE YOUR OWN!** Be sure you are familiar with SCSU’s policy on academic honesty (check out the **Student Handbook** on SCSU’s web page).

Course Outline

| <u>WEEK/DATE</u> | <u>LECTURE TOPIC(S)</u> | <u>READING/ ASSIGNMENT(S)</u> | |
|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Sept. 5 | Introductions/Syllabus Summer Orientation Recap | |
| | Sept. 7 | Club Fair: 1-4 pm, Buley Mall (Academic Quad) | |
| | Sept. 8 | Southern Day of Service, 9:00 am-2:00 pm Meet in Residence Quad CT Green Expo and CT Folk Festival, 10 am-6 pm, Buley Mall | |
| 2 | Sept. 10 | Learning Communities: **Last Day for Add/Drop** | <i>Why Do I Have to Take This Class?</i> |
| | Sept. 12 | Theories of Learning | N: Chpt. 1,2 Journal #1 Due |
| | Sept. 14 | Workshop #1 | Bring G&B: Intro/1 |
| 3 | Sept. 17 | New Student Convocation: 1:00 pm, Lyman Auditorium | |
| | Sept. 18 | Prof. Eric Reeves' Lecture: Darfur, 5:00 pm, EN A 120 | |
| | Sept. 19 | No Class Attend Reeve's Lecture | CCA Paper Due |
| | Sept. 21 | Diversity & Learning | N: 3,4; Journal #2 Due |
| | (Sept. 21 | **Last Day for pass/fail option for Fall 2007**) | |
| 4 | Sept. 24 | Workshop #2 | Bring G&B: 2 |
| | Sept. 26 | American Culture in the Classroom | Observation of HIS 101 N:5 Journal Entry #3 Due |
| | Sept. 28 | Mapping the Campus | |
| 5 | Oct. 1 | "The Gods & Failure" | P: 1 Journal Entry #4 Due |

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| | Oct. 3 | Workshop #3 | Bring G&B: 3 |
| | Oct. 5 | Presentation on Mapping | Mapping the Campus Due |
| 6 | Oct. 8 | Managing College: Time, Teacher & Class **Spring 2008 Course Schedule available on the Web** | N:6 Journal Entry #5 Due |
| | Oct. 10 | Time Management /Workshop | catalogue/course schedules |
| | Oct. 12 | Workshop | Bring G&B: 4,5 |
| 7 | Oct. 15 | Lessons from a Senior | N:7 Journal Entry #6 Due Portfolio DUE |
| | Oct. 17 | Assessing the professor | **Self-assessments due** |
| | Oct. 19 | Fieldtrip: TBA | |
| 8 | Oct. 22 | “Gods That Fail” | P:2,3 Journal Entry #7 Due |
| | Oct. 24 | Course Eval: HIS 101 | |
| | Oct. 26 | Fieldtrip: Yale Museum/Lunch | |
| 9 | Oct. 29 | “Gods That May Serve” | P: 4 Journal Entry #8 Due |
| | Oct. 31 (Oct. 31 | Workshop Midterm Grades due) | Bring G&B: 6,7 |
| | Nov. 2 (Nov. 2 | Fieldtrip: TBA **Last Day for Course Withdrawals for Fall 2007**) | |
| 10 | Nov. 5 | “Spaceship Earth” | P:5 Journal Entry #9 Due |
| | Nov. 7 | **Majors Expo** | |
| | Nov. 9 | Film: Declining by Degrees | |
| 11 | **Nov. 12, 6:01 am | Spring 2008 Web Registration begins for freshmen** | |
| | Nov. 12 | “Fallen Angel” | P:6 Journal Entry #10 Due |

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| | Nov. 14 | Workshop | Bring G&B: 8,9 |
| | Nov. 16 | Fieldtrip: Library Tour, Intro to databases | |
| 12 | Nov. 19 | “The American Experiment” | P:7 Journal Entry #11 Due |
| | | **Nov. 21-23: No Class: Thanksgiving Break!** | |
| 13 | Nov. 26 | “Law of Diversity” | P:8 Journal Entry #12 Due |
| | Nov. 28 | Workshop | Bring G&B:10 |
| | Nov. 30 | Work on Ethnography: P&O | |
| 14 | Dec. 3 | Discussion | P:9 Journal Entry #13 Due |
| | Dec. 5 | Workshop | Bring G&B |
| | Dec. 7 | Fieldtrip TBA | |
| 15 | Dec. 10 | Nathan & Postman | Review |
| | Dec. 12 | Evaluation of FYE **Self-assessments due** | |
| | Dec. 14 | Course Evaluation Essay on Nathan/Postman | Journal Entry #14 Due Assignment distributed in class. |
| 16 | Dec. 20 | ****<u>FINAL EXAM-Wednesday 12/19 12:45-2:45</u>**** | |