

Department of Archaeology and
Anthropology
University of Wales, Lampeter

*Notes for Anthropology Students on
Reading,
Writing Essays & Presentations*

Contents:

Studying at University	2
Reading	3
Essays	6
Presentations	15

STUDYING AT UNIVERSITY

Most students find that studying for an undergraduate degree at university marks a considerable change from the way they were taught at school and college. Not only are students taught in contexts not encountered in schools (such as lectures), students are also left a lot more to their own devices and expected to pursue independent study aided by directions from course tutors. The result of this is that you will find you are expected to acquire reading, writing and learning skills that are not required in school but which are indispensable to the successful pursuit of an undergraduate degree.

Take, for example, the issue of **reading**. Particularly on social science and humanities courses, you will find that you are expected to read a lot more than you were at school, and that emphasis will be placed less on remembering what you have read than on analysing it. Furthermore, you will find that the kind of reading material you encounter will be largely different. Although some courses make use of textbooks, you are expected to base your work on primary sources, that is publications derived from original research.

When it comes to **writing**, you will also find a new set of expectations awaiting you. Whereas pre- university written work often requires you concentrate on the presentation of information, about which you may have to say only a little, undergraduate essays require you to say considerably more, often about less information. What is important in undergraduate essays is not the information – the facts, the data – but what you have to say about it, what your opinion is. The consequence of this is that undergraduate essays are largely evaluated in terms of the argument they contain, rather than the mere accuracy of the information presented in them.

Finally, you will quickly realize that the amount of time you spend in lectures and seminars is only a small part of the amount of time you are expected to be working. You will therefore find that you need to develop new ways of not only reading and writing but also **studying**. Much of your time at university will therefore be spent in independent study. This too requires you to develop skills – of time management and self- discipline, for example – and places the onus upon you, rather than on lecturers and tutors, to ensure that you are spending your time profitably.

As many of you will find that kinds of reading, writing and study skills expected of you at university are new to you, it is advisable that you consult or buy some of the many books available that focus on these issues. Some recent examples that you could profitably look at are:

Clanchy, J. & B. Ballard, *How to Write Essays: A Practical Guide for Students* (Longman, 1983)

Cuba, L. & J. Cocking, *How to Write about the Social Sciences* (Longman, 1994)

Creme, P. & M. Lea, *Writing at University: A Guide for Students* (Open University Press, 2003)

Greetham, B. *How to Write Better Essays* (Palgrave, 2001)
 Mounsey, C. *Essays and Dissertations* (Oxford University Press, 2002)
 Northedge, A. *The Good Study Guide* (Open University Press)
 Redman, P. *Good Essay Writing: A Social Sciences Guide* (Sage, 2001)

READING

A General Point about Studying Social Anthropology

You may have noticed that the majority of your time for a course is not timetabled: effectively you have one two hour block per week, which may or may not be divided into lecture and seminar portions. The remainder of your time for this course should be spent reading and writing. Indeed, whilst lectures and other instructive components are meant to be informative, you should not view them as the principal part of the learning process in studying anthropology. In fact, it is expected that you should principally learn about and gain a deeper understanding of issues in anthropology through reading and writing. Hence, the amount of formal teaching in your timetable is relatively small compared to the time you are expected to be engaged in independent study.

Reading Lists and Information Skills

Reading lists contain a wide range of books and articles. Some of them you may be directed to read (e.g. seminar readings) whilst others form part of lists of 'further reading' which relate to lecture and seminar topics, and essay questions. Whilst reading lists by and large group readings under certain topics, you should not necessarily expect a reading list to direct you to the exact sequence of pages relevant to a lecture or seminar topic, or an essay question. Indeed, sometimes it is impossible to so direct a reader because, for example, the relevant information is scattered throughout a book. This situation places the onus upon you, as the reader, to develop strategies and techniques for finding information and assessing its relevance, as well as methods of keeping records of information you have found. Indeed, 'information skills' (such as accessing, assessing the relevance of, interpreting, and presenting information) are some of the more general things you are expected to acquire during your time at university. Put more plainly, you are required to develop skills for reading, taking notes, writing, and speaking in public. The latter two will be dealt with in later sections; for now, we will focus on reading and taking notes.

Reading Skills

When you are using a reading list to help you write an essay, you frequently have to decide which texts are the most relevant to the issues you wish to discuss. There are a number of useful skills that it is worth acquiring to reduce the amount of time you spend deciding whether or not a text is relevant. Simply reading a book or article from beginning to end is not usually an efficient way of reading. Doing so may mean you spend an hour or two (or even longer) finding out that what you have read is of little relevance to the task at hand. There are a number of quicker ways of assessing the relevance and usefulness of a text

before you sit down to read it in more detail.

Abstracts and Summaries

Journal articles usually carry an abstract (either before or after the article) which spell out the substantive content of the piece. Books, on the other hand, seldom carry abstracts. However, the concerns and content of a book can sometimes be gleaned from the publisher's blurb, although it should be remembered that this is an aspect of marketing – it is written to persuade you to read the book, and as such may make claims which you may come to think the book does not actually fulfill. In addition, it is often the case that a book's Preface, or a section of the Introduction, contains a summary (sometimes chapter by chapter) of the book's contents and argument. Abstracts and summaries should therefore be read before anything else, as these are a quick way of gaining an impression of what a text is about, and giving you some clues about a text's likely relevance and usefulness.

Contents Lists: Using Chapter Headings and Sub-Headings

The impression gained from a summary of a book can be enhanced by looking at a book's contents list, paying particular attention to the chapter headings and sub-headings. If these are not detailed in the contents list, flick through the book to look at the headings and sub-headings used in the main body of the text.

Indexes

Indexes are another useful guide to a book's substantive concerns as well as more marginal issues. They can also be very useful as a way of finding information on a subject (e.g. taboo, exchange) which is scattered throughout the book rather than being gathered together in a single chapter or sequence of pages.

Introductions and Conclusions

The first and last sections of an article or book will give you a more detailed and nuanced idea of its content and relevance than an abstract or summary, and it is often useful to read these sections before embarking on the middle passages of a text. Indeed, once you have gleaned an idea of what a text is about from its abstract or summary, and its introduction and conclusion, the middle passages will make more sense.

Speed Reading

One effective way of quickly skim-reading a text is to read the first (and sometimes last) sentence of each paragraph. Though your understanding of the text will be superficial, it will quickly give you an idea of its principal concerns, as well as the location of passages on a particular issue (this is a useful method to employ when a text lacks sub-headings and/or an index).

Reading and Note-Taking

You should develop a routine of reading and writing as a way of making sure you use independent study time effectively. Many students find it effective to work somewhere where they are seldom disturbed or where they feel at ease

(e.g. their room, a particular part of the library). Students also tend to find it best to parcel up their time, giving themselves short breaks between longer periods of study. You should therefore try to allow yourself periods of at least an hour and a half of uninterrupted work in which to do the relevant reading. During that time read and re-read actively and use the time efficiently. If you are not sure how to read and take notes efficiently, you should have a look at some of the books available on reading and writing at university (listed above, p2).

When you are taking notes in preparation for anthropology essays (or for classes for that matter) it is important that you always record the following:

- the name of the author(s)
- in the case of authored books: the title of the book
- in the case of a chapter in an edited collection: the title of the chapter, the name of the collection, and the names of the editor(s)
- in the case of a journal article: the title of the article, the name of the journal, the volume and page numbers of the article
- the date of publication
- the page numbers on which the information or quotation you are noting are taken from

You should also take particular care in making sure that it is clear to you (both when you make notes and at a later date) what information is taken directly from the text you are reading, and what are your own comments on that information. You can do this by a variety of means (using coloured pens, for example, or circling your own comments) but make sure that you know what constitutes a quote from a book, a paraphrase of a passage from a book, and your comments on either – this has crucial implications for issues of plagiarism.

ESSAYS

A General Note

The noun “essay” comes from the French *essai*, meaning “trial”. This is “trial” in the sense of “trying out” rather than, as you may at first imagine (!?), a burden to be endured. You should not therefore think of essays as being either right or wrong but rather as your own attempt to work toward an answer to the question posed. What an essay should show is your ability to reason, to put forward an argument, to use evidence, to assess and interpret sources, and to communicate your understanding of what you have read and learned to the reader.

What Are Essay Markers Looking For?

Assessing a piece of written work is not something which can be reduced to a standardized formula. However, when marking an essay an examiner looks at a number of factors, such as: the overall organization of the essay; the structure of the argument; the clarity, quality and originality of the discussion, analysis and interpretation; the use of relevant literature; and the quality of the writing (including grammar, spelling and punctuation); attention is also paid to whether or not referencing and the bibliography follow an accepted format. Points on each of these fronts are made below.

Choosing and Answering an Essay Question

In the course of listening to lectures or participating in seminars, you will have found that some topics in anthropology appeal to you more than others. When it comes to choosing an essay on the reading list choose a subject which interests you -- but don't neglect the other topics altogether since you will need to know about some of them for the exams. In selecting an essay to write on, make sure you have read the question carefully and understand exactly what it means: if you don't, or you're not quite sure, you can ask your tutor for clarification. And just as important: when you write your essay, *be sure that you answer the question set* (a point that is as applicable to examinations as well as term-time essays).

Reading for Essays

Essay titles are often linked to a specific topic on the reading list. It is usually the case that the reading list, as well as information obtained from lectures and seminars, clearly indicates what the appropriate reading matter is for a specific essay, but if in doubt, the best policy is ask your tutor for assistance. However, though the reading list may contain several relevant references for the essay you have chosen to do, you should not feel that you are confined to the reading list for that topic when writing an essay. When you find it useful to do so, you should bring in material from a different topic, and many essay titles are designed to enable you to draw on material from more than one topic. In addition, you are encouraged to read beyond the reading list by (i) following up suggested readings in textbooks, encyclopaedias and dictionaries; (ii) following up items listed in bibliographies of other things you read; (iii) making use of any monographs you have read, and (iv) more generally browsing the library for relevant books and journal articles.

How Much Reading is Required?

A good essay should display a command of primary reference material (rather than a summary of material in secondary sources, such as textbooks or encyclopaedias) and should go well beyond the discussion of this material in the lectures. Though there is no absolute limit to the number of items contained in a bibliography, a well-researched first-year essay will likely contain around 6-8 references (the expectation being that bibliographies grow in size the longer you are at university); conversely, a poorly-researched essay is often one which shows little reading (or displays little understanding and/or makes virtually no use of many of the items contained in the bibliography) and draws heavily on secondary sources (such as encyclopaedia entries and textbooks).

A Good Anthropology Essay (i): Content

It is difficult to specify in detail all the characteristics of a good anthropology essay but students may find the following points helpful.

Arguments and Evidence

The most important difference between writing at school and at university is that undergraduate-level essays are usually judged on the basis of the author's ability to construct a coherent argument rather than their ability to summarize information. The argument developed in undergraduate essays is not usually an original one, and that does not matter; what is important is that your essay has an argument, and that it is put forward both clearly and logically. You will find, therefore, that your essays are marked in terms of their argument and its coherence: an essay which lacks a coherent argument, or any argument at all, will get low marks; while one which has a clear and coherent argument will get higher marks. An essay's central argument should take the form of a claim or proposition or thesis which is directly related to an essay title, either in the form of an answer to a question, or a response prompted by a statement. For example, where the essay question is 'Is Social Anthropology a Science' the argument might be that 'social anthropology is a diverse subject, some of which resembles science by seeking to prove or disprove a hypothesis, whilst some does not'. A different essay title might be: 'Discuss the following definition of ritual: ritual is prescribed formal behaviour for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers'. One argument in response to this definition might be 'ritual can be seen during occasions given over to technological routine', while another might be 'ritual need not make reference to mystical beings or powers'.

Another way of thinking about the argument contained in an essay is that it is an opinion. You should not be afraid to voice your own opinion in an essay, which is to say you should not be afraid to argue a particular point. But you should note that whether the argument you advance is an original one or one derived from what you have read it needs to be supported by evidence, for without evidence an argument can only remain unsubstantiated and unproven; in short, the argument will be stated but not demonstrated. You must therefore always ensure that any argument you make in an essay is backed up by

evidence, or what is often referred to as data. For example, if you wish to argue that rituals need not make reference to mystical beings and powers you must supply evidence of this, i.e. an example of a ritual in which no reference is made to mystical beings and powers.

As undergraduates you should be aiming to write essays built around a central argument which is a direct response to a question or statement. Your argument should be backed up with evidence, and be presented in a logical and coherent manner. You should not therefore think of essays as being right or wrong (the world is seldom made up of issues which lead to a right or wrong answer) but in terms of whether or not they have a good or bad argument. A good argument is one which is supported by evidence and where the conclusions reached logically lead from the evidence presented. Conversely, a bad argument is one where the evidence does not lead to the conclusions reached, or where the claims made are not supported by or contradicted by the evidence presented. Finally, make sure that the evidence you use is relevant and supports the argument you are making. The use of evidence to support an argument reveals not only a good knowledge of source material but also an ability to use and interpret such material. So, remember: when your essay is marked it will be partly assessed in terms of the quality of its argument, and not on whether you have summarized all the relevant facts, or whether you agree with the tutor or the people you discuss in your essay.

Theory and Ethnography

It is generally the case that the argument in an essay is constructed in relation to general or theoretical discussions of issues and that ethnography is employed as evidence in support of the argument. As a result, a good anthropology essay should bring together theory and ethnography in the construction of an argument supported by evidence. That is to say it should combine a discussion of theoretical writings and/or general claims made by authors with the analysis of specific ethnographic case studies.

Some essay questions will specifically require you to discuss a particular theoretical literature. Take, for example, the essay question: 'Discuss the usefulness of van Gennep's model of rites of passage for the understanding of initiation rituals'. This question requires you to address a certain body of theory, viz. van Gennep's model of rites of passage. A good answer would look not only at van Gennep's work on rites of passage, but also at other people's discussions of these kinds of rites. The question also directs you to a particular area of ethnographic literature, viz. initiation rites, though it is of course up to you which particular accounts of initiation you choose to focus on. A good essay would therefore construct an argument around a reading of van Gennep's and others' writing on the subject of rites of passage and use ethnographic case studies as evidence to support the argument advanced. Other essay questions may not direct you so clearly to a body of theory. In such instances the onus is upon you to decide what are the general claims and proposals being made about a subject, and then to discuss these in relation to relevant ethnographic

examples.

While reading for an essay you should therefore try to analyse the ethnographic details you have read about in terms of general statements and claims made by authors about particular subjects. It is this constant movement between the general and the particular, between theory and ethnography, that will provide you with the basis for constructing an argument for your essay. You must, therefore, always try to make sure that your essay attempts to analyse ethnographic cases in relation to general claims made by authors, usually most clearly expressed in theoretical discussions of particular topics. Furthermore, you should construct your argument in relation to the general and theoretical claims you encounter in the literature.

Some Final Points About Content

There are four main points to remember about essays.

- Firstly, they must have an argument (which in a social anthropology essay will usually be constructed in relation to anthropological theory concerning a particular topic).
- Secondly, your argument does not have to be original (though better essays do attempt to make an original point in relation to their subject): consequently you do not have to say anything new, but what you do say should be clearly and logically argued, and supported by evidence.
- Thirdly, the argument must be supported by evidence (which in a social anthropology essay will generally take the form of ethnography).
- Finally, avoid trying to include everything you have read. The aim of an essay is not to say everything that can be said about a subject; rather, you should marshal evidence in support of your argument, but no more than is necessary to support your argument, and certainly not so much that the argument is obscured by a mass of superfluous detail.

A Good Anthropology Essay (ii): Structure

It is something of a truism that essays must have a beginning, a middle, and an end. As a general guide this is true, though it not a very useful guide to how to structure an essay. Though it is possible to structure essays in a number of ways, you should take note of the following.

The Question

It has already been mentioned that you should make sure that your essay answers the question: a good essay is one that addresses the title of the essay or the question set clearly and straightforwardly using relevant literature and ethnographic examples. Furthermore, your argument should form an answer to the essay question, or a response to the essay title. Isolating and thinking about the key concepts contained in an essay title and reflecting on the essay title's implications are therefore a crucial part of writing an essay.

The Structure of the Argument

Not only should the argument of an essay be an answer to the essay question or

a response to the essay title, it should also provide the basis for the structure of the essay. In short, your essay should be structured in such a way that (i) you begin by introducing the reader to the basic point of your argument, then (ii) supply evidence in support of your argument, and finally (iii) state what conclusions your argument and evidence lead to. In effect these three parts of the essay form the introduction, main body, and conclusion to an essay.

Introduction

Think of your introduction as an itinerary for a journey: it should indicate to the reader where they are going and what they will see on the way. The direction and scope of an essay should therefore be indicated in its introductory paragraph or paragraphs. This (or these) should clearly state what the essay is about, summarising the argument of the essay and how it relates to relevant anthropological literature on the topic. It should also make clear what evidence is to be used in support of the argument, what the implications of the evidence used are, and spell out briefly what conclusions you have reached. And when you have finished it, make sure that your introduction effectively contains a statement to the effect: 'This essay will argue that. . . '

The Main Body of the Essay

The main body of the essay should develop the argument outlined in the introduction, using evidence to build support for the argument, as well as using it to criticise relevant alternative arguments which you disagree with. Again, there is no exact format to be followed, but the following points may be of some help.

Structuring Your Writing.

As with the essay as a whole, the main body of the essay should be clearly structured, moving from one point to the next in a logical manner. This means that each section, each paragraph, and each sentence, should logically follow on from the previous one and logically precede the next. If you think of it as a kind of story, your argument needs to have a plot, a coherent step-by-step shift from one point to another. Just as a story without a plot is difficult to follow (being a set of apparently random events), an essay with no logically structured argument, or no argument at all, is difficult to understand (because it is little more than a set of random facts and pieces of information).

Using Paragraphs.

Paragraphs break up written text into manageable chunks, both for the reader and writer. But be careful about how you divide your work into paragraphs. Paragraphs that are either too short or too long can be distracting, and paragraphs that contain too many different points or ideas are invariably confusing. It is thus important to remember that paragraphs are units of ideas, not units of length. A paragraph should make a particular point, and you should pay close attention to how you break up your essay into discrete paragraphs.

Using Sub-headings.

In structuring your essay you may find that you move from one issue to another (e.g. from one case study to another) and that this move represents a break (though not a radical shift) in the argument. In such cases do not be afraid to use sub-headings to divide up distinct passages of the essay; sub-headings can often serve as useful pointers to the direction of the argument.

Providing Provisional Summaries.

When you have finished a particular passage that advances the argument you are making you should close the discussion with a brief summary which states in a provisional manner the conclusions that can be drawn at this stage. This provisional summary should also contextualize the issues discussed by saying where the essay is going next and how the previous and following sections of the essay are linked. Doing this provides the reader with a sense of where they have come from and where they are going.

Citations and Referencing.

Be sure to cite adequately the material you are using, using paraphrase and quotation when necessary (on these, see below). You should aim to distinguish between your own ideas and those of the authors you refer to by making clear when your argument and analysis follows or diverges from the discussions found in the reading material you have consulted. Criticism of your sources is an appropriate way of advancing an argument in an essay, but remember that criticism should be backed up with evidence and should not take the form of unsubstantiated, moralistic or generalized polemic.

The Conclusion

The conclusion of an essay should effectively state how the argument you have advanced answers or provides a response to the essay title. A good conclusion will also indicate how the argument advanced relates more generally to writings on the issues raised by the essay. This might mean, for example, that you briefly mention other pieces of evidence which support your argument, or other authors whose own arguments are either in agreement with or contradict your own. But beware if trying to put too much in a conclusion; and do not make claims that are not supported by the evidence you have provided in the essay.

Quality of Writing

As a rule, brevity usually leads to clarity, and you should aim to write as clearly as possible so as to ensure that what you are saying can be understood by the reader. To ensure this, pay close attention to the vocabulary, tone and style of your essay. In addition, avoid trying to use language and terms that you do not understand in an attempt to make something sound more profound or meaningful than it really is: in the end it is better to write clearly and simply rather than complexly and/or incoherently (even though not all academics follow this themselves, it is a policy you yourselves should adopt). Finally, ensure that you use anthropological terms and concepts correctly: for example, "the Trobriands society is a matrilineage kinship" is non-sensical and reveals a

poor understanding of both grammar and anthropological concepts, whilst “Trobriand society is matrilineal” or “the society of the Trobriand islands has a system of matrilineal kinship” reveals the opposite.

Many of the books available on essay writing (see p.2 above) provide useful guidance on writing and the use of English. George Orwell’s essay “Politics and the English language,” (reprinted in various collections of his essays, such as *Selected Essays* and *Inside the Whale and Other Essays*) also contains some very pertinent points. But remember: you are writing to make yourself understood, so do your best to ensure that what you have to say *can* be understood.

Rereading and Editing

Before submission an essay should *always* be read over and corrected. This redrafting and editing process should be used to ensure that your essay has a clearly stated and logically structured argument, and that you have answered or provided a suitable response to the essay title. If your essay is lacking in any way on this front you may have to re-structure it by deleting or introducing new passages of text, and altering the order of others. At a more micro level, editing should eliminate any ambiguities in the text and any phrasing that is difficult to follow or understand. The essay should also be checked for errors of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. And remember, if you do not understand what you have written, the reader is even less likely to be able to make sense of it. So: carefully re-read your essay before submission to improve the structure and organization of the essay, eliminate any errors, and change any ambiguous or poor phrasing.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

All essays should be written according to standard conventions of spelling, punctuation and grammar. If in doubt, consult a dictionary or book on English grammar such as Fowler’s *Modern English Usage* (many publishers -- such as Penguin, Oxford, Collins, Chambers -- also offer a range of relatively cheap and highly useful guides to English usage, punctuation, and so forth, several of which are stocked by the library). Three useful guides to punctuation -- an art that is well worth striving to perfect -- are:

R. Allen, *Punctuation* (Oxford University Press)

R Trask, *The Penguin Guide to Punctuation* (Penguin)

L Truss, *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* (Profile)

Please note the following common punctuation and spelling mistakes and make sure that you can distinguish between them:

it’s (it is); *its* (belonging to it)

there (that place); *their* (belonging to them)

effect (consequence; to cause something to happen); *affect* (emotion; to influence)

System of Referencing

When you are reading it is important to accurately note down the source of

information you record in your notes by recording the name of the author, book title, page number, and so forth. This is necessary because it is only with this information to hand that you can properly reference material in your essay. Adequate referencing requires you to indicate in the body of your essay in appropriate places the source of any information you use. Such references vary in kind, but a rough guide to the correct format of references would be:

a general reference:

. . . as Leach's (1954) work shows . . .

. . . mistrust of the concept of culture has been commonplace in British anthropology (e.g. Leach 1954) . . .

N.B. Here the author of the essay is simply referring to Leach's book in a general way, without referring to specific ideas or points made by Leach. If specific points or ideas are referred to then the actual page numbers of the ideas or points should be specified.

a paraphrase:

. . . Leach makes it clear that he does not accept that the equilibrium model of functionalist anthropological theory is of any value (Leach 1954:25) . . .

N.B. This is more specific than a general reference as it refers to a specific point or a particular passage by an author. In the case of a paraphrase, we have the author of the essay's summary of a point made by someone else (in this case Leach). Paraphrases should always be referenced to show the page or pages from which the summarized information has been taken.

a quotation:

. . . as Leach notes, "marriage is a structural relationship which is common to both English and Kachin society" and he goes on to note that "it is symbolised by a ring in the one and a turban in the other" (Leach 1954: 16) . . .

N.B. quotes from anyone else's work must be acknowledged and clearly referenced by the use of speech marks and reference to the page(s) from which they are drawn. When you have changed any of the words within a quote (such as when you need to clarify the sense of the quote) always put the additional or changed words in square brackets [thus] to indicate which words are not those of the original author.

bibliography entry

Finally, if readers of your essay want further information on this work by Leach, then they can turn to the end of your essay where you must provide a separate bibliography indicating publication details of all the books you have referred to in your essay. There readers would find the following information:

Leach, E. (1954) *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, London: Athlone Press

If you have any queries about referencing, please ask your tutor.

Bibliography

Entries in a bibliography must be arranged alphabetically by author and contain full publication details. It is important that you learn this standard system of

referencing as soon as possible. This system can be found in most anthropology journals, such as the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* and *American Anthropologist*. The standard format of bibliographic referencing is as follows:

book:

Leach, E. (1954) *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, London: Athlone Press

edited collection:

Atkinson, J. and S. Errington (eds) (1990) *Power and Difference: Gender in Island Southeast Asia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press

chapter in an edited collection:

Grinker, R. (1997) "Houses in the rainforest: gender and ethnicity among the Lese and Efe in Zaire," in R. Grinker and C. Steiner (eds) *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History and Representation*. Oxford: Blackwell

journal article:

Martin, E. (1991) "The egg and the sperm: how science has constructed a romance based on stereotypical women's roles," *Signs* 16: 485-501

web pages:

Bestor, T. (2000) "How sushi went global," Article available electronically at: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/issue_novdec_2000/essay-bestor.html. Accessed 21/11/2002.

N.B. It is important that you provide full details of a web-page address, and the date on which the page was accessed.

Marking System

Essays are marked out of 100, with the following grading system:

70+ excellent, equivalent to First class degree mark

60-69 good to very good, equivalent to Upper Second (2.i) class degree

50-59 fair to good, equivalent to Lower second (2.ii) class degree

40-49 poor to fair, equivalent to Third class degree

below 40 fail

Final Note

Remember, practice makes perfect with essay writing: if you work hard at it you will find that you are constantly making progress and improving your skills. Finally, pay close attention to comments on the essays which are returned to you; they will provide you with an indication of what you need to do to improve your written work. If you can't understand (or read) the comments, please ask to have them explained to you.

PRESENTATIONS

Aims

During your degree you may be asked to give an individual or group oral presentation. The purpose of these presentations is varied. From the standpoint of studying social anthropology, presentations give you an opportunity to read particular texts and in the process familiarize yourself with a small body of material which can be drawn on in seminars, essays, exams and personal research projects. More broadly, the exercises required for presentations will force you to read and digest a body of information (from written materials or research you have conducted) and produce a synopsis of its contents, to gain experience at speaking in front of an audience, to develop communication and presentation skills, and to engage the interest of an audience in what you have to say. Needless to say, these latter abilities are not only of use in courses you take at university but are also in demand in the job market.

Guidance Notes

Preparation

Presentations work most effectively if you organize what you have to say around a small number of key points. You should also use examples to illustrate certain points (choose the most interesting and accessible ones at your disposal), keeping in mind that it is best to use one telling example rather than three or four thinly sketched ones. Remember who your audience is. You should aim to pitch your talk at a level appropriate to the audience. What can you reasonably expect them to know? And what do you need to explain to make it possible for them to understand what you have to say? Also - practice giving your talk beforehand. Make sure it is not too long. And think about the following questions: is your talk focused? Is it pitched at the right level?

Presentation

You should aim to make clear the main points of your presentation at the very beginning, and reiterate each of these as and when you come to them. This can be done through verbal signposting ("... and this brings me to the second issue ..."), and/or through the use of visuals (blackboards, over-head projections, etc.) You may also want to use visual aids (maps, diagrams, typed quotes, etc.) when relevant as a means of making what you have to say more accessible and easier to follow. Reading aloud a fully prepared text is not a recommended course of action—this can result in alienating your audience. If you feel confident enough to do so, speak from notes rather than a fully prepared text. Speaking from the latter can be effective though, as long as you don't read in a monotone and instead intersperse things with asides to the audience. You can do this by illustrating a point off the cuff and ad-libbing as and when you fancy. As this is an oral rather than written presentation remember to use your voice to good effect: speak clearly and loud enough to be heard (speaking slowly rather than quickly is a good rule of thumb). And don't speak to the desk you are reading from, but to the audience—try to look confident (even if you're not), make eye contact as much as possible, and if you're up to it, try to smile!