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# CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

A TOOLKIT FOR A GLOBAL AGE

KENNETH J. GUEST



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# CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

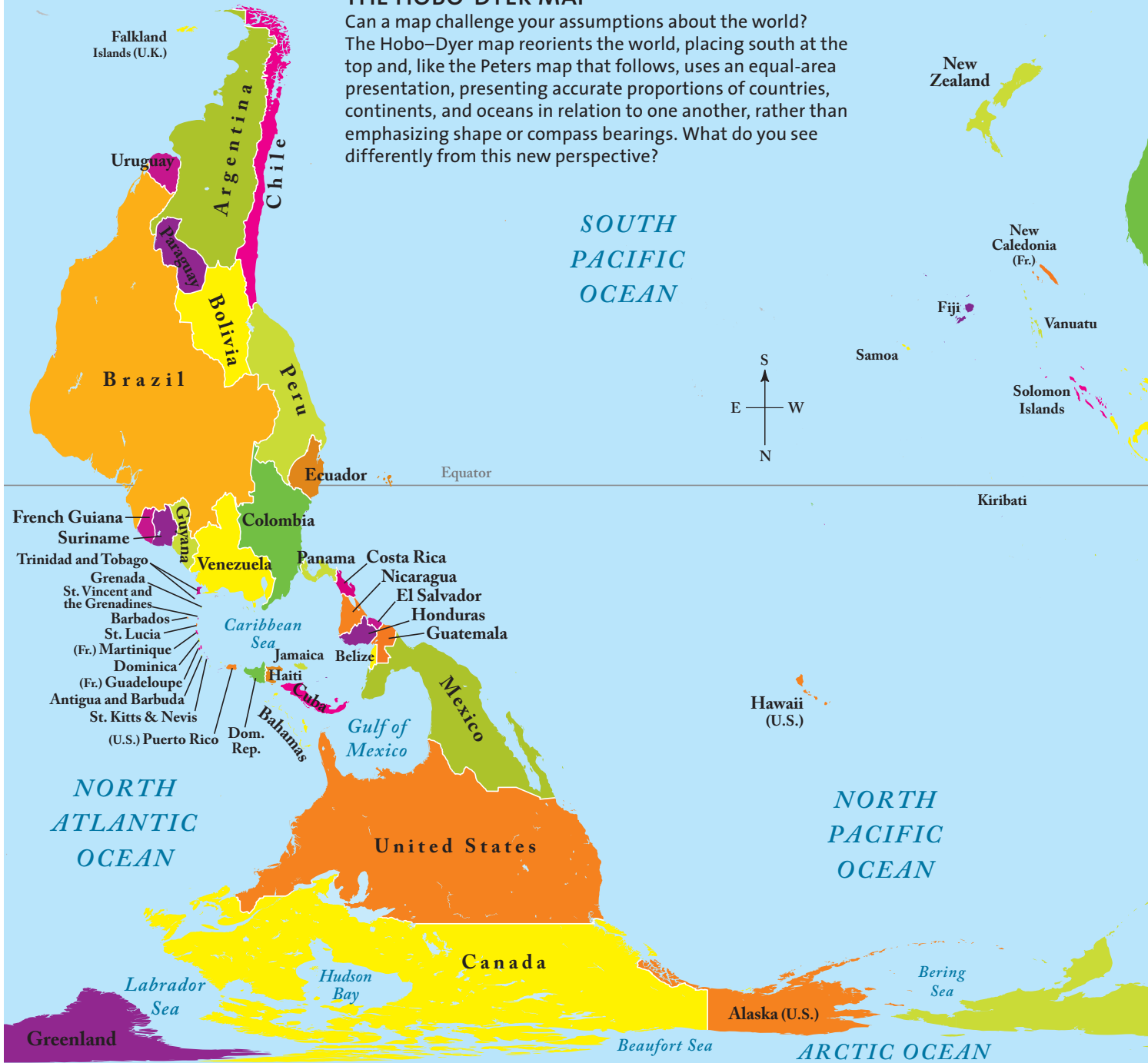
FIRST EDITION

Kenneth J. Guest



## THE HOBO-DYER MAP

Can a map challenge your assumptions about the world? The Hobo-Dyer map reorients the world, placing south at the top and, like the Peters map that follows, uses an equal-area presentation, presenting accurate proportions of countries, continents, and oceans in relation to one another, rather than emphasizing shape or compass bearings. What do you see differently from this new perspective?



Antarctica







# WORLD • POLITICAL

## NATIONAL BOUNDARIES

While man's impact is quite evident, and even striking, on many remotely sensed scenes, sometimes, as in the case with most political boundaries, it is invisible. State, provincial, and national boundaries can follow natural features, such as mountain ridges, rivers, or coastlines. Artificial constructs that possess no physical reality—for example, lines of latitude and longitude—can also determine political borders. The world political map (right) represents man's imaginary lines as they slice and divide Earth.

The National Geographic Society recognizes 192 independent states in the world as represented here. Of those nations, 185 are members of the United Nations.



Winkler Tripel Projection





INDIAN OCEAN

NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN

SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN



T I C A



# Cultural Anthropology



Anthropologists look beyond surface images to examine the complexities of human life in local and global context. Here, a young Tamil woman migrant worker picks tea leaves in Kerala, south India. What more might the tools of anthropology reveal?

# Cultural Anthropology

A TOOLKIT FOR A GLOBAL AGE

KENNETH J. GUEST  
BARUCH COLLEGE  
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK



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**Kenneth J. Guest** is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Baruch College, CUNY, and author of *God in Chinatown: Religion and Survival in New York's Evolving Immigrant Community* (2003). His research focuses on immigration, religion, globalization, ethnicity and entrepreneurialism.

Professor Guest's ethnographic research in China and the United States traces the immigration journey of recent Chinese immigrants from Fuzhou, southeast China, who, drawn by restaurant, garment shop, and construction jobs and facilitated by a vast human smuggling network, have revitalized New York's Chinatown. His writing explores the role of Fuzhounese religious communities in China and the United States; the religious revival sweeping coastal China; the Fuzhounese role in the rapidly expanding U.S. network of all-you-can-eat buffets and take-out restaurants; and the higher education experiences of the Fuzhounese second generation.

A native of Florida, Professor Guest studied Chinese at Beijing University and Middlebury College. He received his B.A. from Columbia University (East Asian Languages and Cultures), an M.A. from Union Theological Seminary (Religious Studies), and the M.A., M.Phil., and Ph.D. from The City University of New York Graduate Center (Anthropology).





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# Preface

Anthropology may be the most important course you take in college. That may seem like a bold statement. But here's what I mean.

## Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit

The world in the twenty-first century is changing at a remarkable pace. We are experiencing an interaction with people, ideas, and systems that is intensifying at breathtaking speed. Communication technologies link people instantaneously across the globe. Economic activities challenge national boundaries. People are on the move within countries and between them. As a result, today we increasingly encounter the diversity of humanity, not on the other side of the world but in our schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, religious communities, and families. How will we develop the skills and strategies for engaging and navigating the complex, multicultural, global, and rapidly changing reality of the world around us?

Anthropology is the toolkit you are looking for. Cultural anthropology is the study of humans, particularly the many ways people around the world today and throughout human history have organized themselves to live together: to get along, to survive, to thrive, and to have meaningful lives. *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* will introduce you to the fascinating work of anthropologists and the research strategies and analytical perspectives that anthropologists have developed—our tools of the trade—that can help you better understand and engage today's world as you move through it.

I teach Introduction to Cultural Anthropology to hundreds of students every year at Baruch College, a senior college of The City University of New York. Baruch has an incredibly diverse student body, with

immigrants from over a hundred countries, speaking dozens of languages and thinking about culture, race, gender, and family in as many different ways. Some of my students will become anthropology majors. More will become anthropology minors. But at Baruch, in fact, most students will become business majors.

This book emerges from my efforts to make anthropology relevant to all of my students as they navigate their everyday lives, think about the world as it is and as it is becoming, and consider tackling the crucial issues of our times. On a practical level, we all employ the skills of anthropology on a daily basis. Every time you walk into a room and try to figure out how to fit into a new group of people—in your classroom, in a student club, at the office, at a party, in your religious community, when your new love interest takes you home to meet the family—how in the world do you deduce what the rules are? Where you fit in? What you're supposed to do? What the power dynamics are? What you can contribute to the group? *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* is designed to help you develop those skills—to think more deeply and analyze more carefully—and to prepare you to use them in a diversity of settings at home or around the world.

## Why a New Textbook?

The world has changed dramatically in the past forty years and so has the field of anthropology. *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* presents the theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical innovations that are transforming anthropology and highlights both historical and contemporary research that can provide students with insights about how anthropologists are approaching the crucial challenges and questions of our times.

## Globalization

As the world is changing, so too are the people anthropologists study. Even the way anthropologists conduct research is changing. In the contemporary period of rapid globalization, the movement, connection, and interrelatedness that have always been a part of human reality have intensified and become more explicit, reminding us that our actions have consequences for the whole world, not just for our own lives and those of our families and friends. This book integrates globalization into every chapter, analyzing its effects throughout the text rather than in a series of boxes, icons, or the occasional extra chapter so commonly seen in contemporary textbooks. The introductory chapter, “Anthropology in a Global Age,” establishes an analytical framework of globalization that is developed in every succeeding chapter—whether the topic is fieldwork, language, ethnicity, economics, kinship, or art—and gives students the tools to understand its impact on people’s lives as they encounter them in ethnographic examples throughout the book.

## Reframing the Culture Concept

The concept of culture has been central to anthropological analysis since the beginning of our field. But anthropologists have significantly reframed our thinking about culture over the past forty years. In the 1960s, Clifford Geertz synthesized anthropological thinking about culture as a system of meaning—shared norms, values, symbols, and categories. In the ensuing years, anthropologists have paid increasing attention to the relationship of power to culture, building on the work of Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, and Eric Wolf to examine the ways cultural meanings are created, learned, taught, enforced, negotiated, and contested. *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* integrates this holistic and complex concept of culture into every chapter, exploring both meaning and power in human culture. Chapter 6, for example, is entitled “Race and Racism,” acknowledging that not only is race a social construction of ideas but also that ideas of race

can be expressed and made real through cultural processes, institutions, and systems of power—racism—in ways that create patterns of stratification and inequality in U.S. culture and in cultures around the world.

## Anthropology for the Twenty-First Century

*Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* reflects the field of anthropology as it is developing in the twenty-first century. While carefully covering the foundational work of early anthropologists, every chapter has been designed to introduce the cutting-edge research and theory that make anthropology relevant to today’s world. Chapters on classic anthropological topics such as language, religion, kinship, and art incorporate contemporary research and help students understand why anthropological thinking matters in day-to-day life. A chapter on human origins presents the current scholarship in physical anthropology and creates opportunities for engaging the current U.S. evolution debates. Chapters on sexuality, the global economy, class and inequality, migration, and health and illness give students a sense of historical and contemporary research in the field and bring the presentation of anthropology fully into the twenty-first century.

## Ethnography

Anthropologists conduct fascinating research about the lives of people all over the world. In many ways ethnography is at the heart of anthropology, reflecting our unique research strategies, our analytical methodologies, and our deep commitment to the project of cross-cultural understanding and engagement in our attempts to make the world a better place. But ethnographies often get lost in introductory textbooks. *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* introduces over ninety separate ethnographic studies set in dozens of different countries, presenting both new research and classic studies in ways that are accessible to undergraduates so that the rich work of anthropologists comes alive over the course of the semester.

### *Relevance*

*Cultural Anthropology* responds to my students' request for relevance in a textbook. Each chapter opens with a recent event that raises central questions about the workings of human culture. Key questions throughout the chapter guide students through an introduction to the anthropological strategies and analytical frameworks that can enable them to think more deeply about the chapter-opening event and the underlying issues they may confront in their own lives. A student exercise in each chapter, "Your Turn: Fieldwork," provides students—either individually or in groups—with an opportunity to try out the ideas and strategies introduced in the chapter. "Thinking Like an Anthropologist" sections wrap up each chapter and challenge students to apply what they have learned.

### *Anthropologists Engage the World*

Whether anthropologists teach in a university or work as applied anthropologists, they use the practical tools and analytical insights of anthropology to actively engage crucial issues facing our world. In the "Anthropologists Engage the World" feature, this book introduces some of the field's leading personalities and practitioners discussing why they have chosen to be anthropologists, what tools they think anthropology brings to understanding and addressing global challenges, and why they think anthropology can help students understand how the world really works. This feature offers students insights into what it can mean to be an anthropologist and how the skills of anthropology can be invaluable for living in a global age.

## Additional Resources

Learn more at [www.norton.com/instructors](http://www.norton.com/instructors)

The media package for *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* provides additional pedagogical tools that inspire students to DO anthropology and apply it to their own lives. Instructors have everything they need to make traditional and online classes easier to manage: a DVD of clips that will enliven lectures and spark discussion; an Instructor Resource Disc with illustrated PowerPoints that include instructor-view lecture notes; and a fully customizable coursepack for Blackboard and other course-management systems.

### Ebook

Available at [nortonebooks.com](http://nortonebooks.com)

*Cultural Anthropology* is also available as an ebook. An affordable and convenient alternative, the ebook retains the content of the print book and allows students to highlight and take notes with ease.

### Instructor Resource Disc

David Anderson, Radford University/Roanoke College

This helpful classroom presentation tool features:

- **Lecture PowerPoints.** These visually dynamic lecture PowerPoint slides include a suggested classroom lecture outline in the notes field that will be particularly helpful to first-time teachers.
- **Art PowerPoints and JPEGs.** All of the art from the book sized for classroom display.

### Instructor DVD

Russell Sharman

The Instructor DVD features documentary and ethnographic film clips for initiating classroom discussion and showing students how anthropology is relevant to their lives. Filmmaker and anthropologist Russell Sharman has selected clips that are both engaging and pedagogically useful. The clips are also offered

in streaming versions in the coursepack. Each streamed clip is accompanied by a quiz, exercise, or activity.

### Coursepack

David Anderson, Radford University/Roanoke College, and Chad T. Morris, Roanoke College

*Cultural Anthropology's* coursepack offers assessment and review materials for instructors who use Blackboard, Moodle, Canvas, and other learning-management systems. In addition to chapter-based assignments, test banks and quizzes, and an optional ebook, the coursepack includes interactive learning tools that will enliven hybrid, online, or traditional classrooms.

### Test Bank

Jennifer Cardinal, University of New Mexico; Andrew Carey, University of New Mexico; Shirley Heying, University of New Mexico; Jayne Howell, California State University, Long Beach; Michelle Raisor, Blinn College; Nicholas Rattray, Butler University

The test bank for *Cultural Anthropology* is designed to help instructors prepare exams. Devised according to Bloom's taxonomy, the test bank includes 75 questions per chapter. In addition to Bloom's, each question is tagged with metadata that place it in the context of the chapter, as well as difficulty level, making it easy to construct tests that are meaningful and diagnostic.

### Interactive Instructor's Guide

The Interactive Instructor's Guide makes lecture development easy with an array of teaching resources that can be searched and browsed according to a number of criteria. Resources include chapter outlines and summaries; lecture ideas; discussion questions, recommended readings, videos, and websites; video exercises with streaming video; and activities with downloadable handouts. Instructors can subscribe to a mailing list to be notified of periodic updates and new content.

# Acknowledgments

Writing a book of this scope is a humbling experience. I have been awed by the remarkable work of the anthropologists I have encountered, whether through written texts, films, or one-on-one conversations. And I have been inspired by the commitment of my fellow anthropologists to deep understanding of people and cultures, to the search for insights into how the world really works, and to engagement with the world and its people in ways that may help make the world a better

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me to explore the theme of anthropologists engaging the world through their spring 2012 conference. My research assistants Alessandro Angelini, Andrew Hermann, Chris Grove, Suzanna Goldblatt, Lynn Horridge and Chris Baum continually introduced me to the richness of contemporary scholarship and creative strategies for teaching and learning. Thanks also to a wonderful group of friends and family who have supported and encouraged me during this fascinating and challenging journey: K and Charlene, Zöe, Sally and Steve, Asher, Douglas, Marty and Linda, the guys at the Metro Diner—Nick, Marco, Antonio, and Mario—the SPSA community, the Ajax soccer family, Shari, Vicki, Frances Helen, and Thomas Luke.

Finally, I would like to thank my students at Baruch College who every class ask to be introduced to an anthropology that is relevant to their daily lives, that tackles significant contemporary issues, and that provides them the tools of analysis and empowerment to live awake, conscious, and engaged. This book is dedicated to you and your potential to make the world a better place.

Perhaps the quintessential human task is to pass to the next generation the accumulated insights, understandings, and knowledge that will empower them to live life fully and meaningfully and to meet the challenges confronting humanity and the planet. I hope this book might contribute to that existential endeavor.



# Cultural Anthropology

A photograph showing two women sitting at a wooden table in a women-only internet cafe in Kabul, 2012. The woman on the left is wearing a dark red headscarf and a dark top, looking towards the right. The woman on the right is wearing a light blue headscarf and a blue top, looking down at a laptop. The background features a wall with large, stylized letters 'W' and 'M' in red and blue, and a red heart shape. A brown patterned cushion is visible on the left.

Anthropologists in the twenty-first century engage a world that is experiencing an unprecedented interaction of people, ideas, images, and things that continues to intensify. Communication technologies link people instantaneously across the globe. Economic activities challenge national boundaries. People are on the move between countries and within them. Here, young Afghan women work at the first women-only Internet café in Kabul, 2012. How can *you* use the tools of anthropology to engage this world on the move?

# PART 1 Anthropology for the 21st Century





Coca Cola

Go Back  
Go Back  
NAPM

Indian village women protest the Coca Cola company's exploitation of underground water supplies.



p. 9



p. 9



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## CHAPTER 1

# Anthropology in a Global Age

Every morning the women of Plachimada, a rural area in southern India, begin a five-kilometer (three-mile) trek in search of fresh water. The morning journey for water is a common task for many women across the world, for one-third of the planet's population lives with water scarcity. But such scarcity is new for the people of Plachimada, an area of typically rich agricultural harvests.

Local residents trace the changes to March 2000, when the Coca-Cola Company opened a bottling plant in the village. The plant is capable of producing 1.2 million bottles of Coke, Sprite, and Fanta every day. Nine liters of fresh water are needed to make one liter of Coke, so Plachimada's large underground aquifer was an attractive resource for the company. But according to local officials, when the company began to drill more wells and install high-powered pumps to extract groundwater for the factory, the local water table fell dramatically—from 45 meters (147.5 feet) below the surface to 150 meters (492 feet), far more than could be explained by periods of limited rainfall. Hundreds of local non-Coca-Cola wells ran dry, and harvests became much less productive. Local residents also claimed that Coca-Cola workers were dumping chemical wastes on land near the factory and that the runoff was polluting the groundwater. Local women organized protests and a sit-in at the factory gates.

With the assistance of local media and international human rights networks, the protestors' activism drew national and international attention. It even spurred solidarity actions, including support from university students in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Norway. As a result, the local village council withdrew the Coca-Cola factory's



**MAP 1.1**  
Plachimada

license. But the state government maintained its support. The case finally reached the highest state court, which ruled that Coca-Cola must cease illegal extraction of groundwater in Plachimada (Shiva 2006; Aiyer 2007).

For those of us who often enjoy a Coke with lunch or dinner—or breakfast—the story of the women of Plachimada offers a challenge to consider how our lives connect to theirs. It is a challenge to explore how a simple soft drink, made by a U.S. corporation with global operations, may link people halfway around the world in ways both simple and profound. This is also the challenge of anthropology today: to understand the rich diversity of human life and to see how our particular life experiences connect to those of others. By bringing these perspectives together, we can grasp more fully the totality and potential of human life.

At the same time, the world is changing before our eyes. Whether we call it a global village or a world without borders, we in the twenty-first century are experiencing a level of interaction among people, ideas, and systems that is intensifying at a breathtaking pace. Communication technologies link people instantaneously across the globe. Economic activities challenge national boundaries. People are on the move within countries and among them. Violence and terrorism disrupt lives. Humans have had remarkable success at feeding a growing world population, yet income inequality continues to increase—among nations and also within them. And increasing human diversity on our doorstep opens possibilities, both for deeper understanding and for greater misunderstanding. Clearly, the human community in the twenty-first century is being drawn further into a global web of interaction.

For today's college student, every day can be a cross-cultural experience. This may manifest itself in the most familiar places: the news you see on television, the music you listen to, the foods and beverages you consume, the women or men you date, the classmates you study with, the religious communities you attend. Today you can realistically imagine contacting any of our seven billion co-inhabitants on the planet. You can read their posts on Facebook and watch their videos on YouTube. You can visit them. You wear clothes that they make. You make movies that they view. You can learn from them. You can affect their lives. How do you meet this challenge of deepening interaction and interdependence?

Anthropology provides a unique set of tools, including strategies and perspectives, for understanding our rapidly changing, globalizing world. Most of you are already budding cultural anthropologists without realizing it. Wherever you may live or go to school, you are probably experiencing a deepening encounter with the world's diversity. This phenomenon leads to broad questions such as, How do we approach human diversity in our universities, businesses, families, and religious communities? How do we understand the impact of global transformations on our lives?





**FIGURE 1.1** In the twenty-first century, people are experiencing unprecedented levels of interaction, encounter, movement, and exchange. Here, passengers board an overcrowded train in Dhaka, Bangladesh, returning home to celebrate the Muslim holy day of Eid al-Fitr.

Whether our field is business or education, medicine or politics, we all need a skill set for analyzing and engaging a multicultural and increasingly interconnected world and workplace. *Cultural Anthropology: A Toolkit for a Global Age* introduces the anthropologist’s tools of the trade to help you to better understand and engage the world as you move through it, and if you so choose, to apply those strategies to the challenges confronting us and our neighbors around the world. To begin our exploration of anthropology, we’ll consider four key questions:

- What is anthropology?
- Through what lenses do anthropologists gain a comprehensive view of human cultures?
- What is globalization, and why is it important for anthropology?
- How is globalization transforming anthropology?

## What Is Anthropology?

**Anthropology** is the study of the full scope of human diversity and the application of that knowledge to help people of different backgrounds better understand one another. The word *anthropology* derives from the Greek words *anthropos* (“human”) and *logos* (“thought,” “reason,” or “study”). The roots of anthropology lie in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Europeans’ economic and colonial expansion increased that continent’s contact with people worldwide.

**anthropology:** The study of the full scope of human diversity, past and present, and the application of that knowledge to help people of different backgrounds better understand one another.

## Brief Background

Technological breakthroughs in transportation and communication during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—shipbuilding, the steam engine, railroads, the telegraph—rapidly transformed the long-distance movement of people, goods, and information, in terms of both speed and quantity. As colonization, communication, trade, and travel expanded, groups of merchants, missionaries, and government officials traveled the world and returned to Europe with reports and artifacts of what seemed to them to be “exotic” people and practices. More than ever before, Europeans encountered the incredible diversity of human cultures and appearances. *Who are these people?* they asked themselves. *Where did they come from? Why do they appear so different from us?*

From the field’s inception in the mid-1800s, anthropologists have conducted research to answer specific questions confronting humanity. And they have applied their knowledge and insights to practical problems facing the world.

Franz Boas (1858–1942), one of the founders of American anthropology, became deeply involved in early twentieth-century debates on immigration, serving for a term on a presidential commission examining U.S. immigration policies. In an era when many scholars and government officials considered the different people of Europe to be of distinct biological races, U.S. immigration policies privileged immigrants from northern and western Europe over those from southern and eastern Europe. Boas worked to undermine these racialized views of immigrants. He conducted studies that showed the wide variation of physical forms within groups of the same national origin, as well as the marked physical changes in the children and grandchildren of immigrants as they adapted to the environmental conditions in their new country (Baker 2004; Boas 1912).

Audrey Richards (1899–1984), studying the Bemba people in what is now Zambia in the 1930s, focused on issues of health and nutrition among women and children, bringing concerns for nutrition to the forefront of anthropology. Her ethnography, *Chisungu* (1956), featured a rigorous and detailed study of the coming-of-age rituals of young Bemba women and established new standards for the conduct of anthropological research. Richards’s research is often credited with opening a pathway for the study of nutritional issues and women’s and children’s health in anthropology.

Today anthropologists apply their knowledge and research strategies to a wide range of social issues. For example, they study HIV/AIDS in Africa, immigrant farm workers in the United States, ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia, street children in Brazil, and Muslim judicial courts in Egypt. Anthropologists trace the spread of disease, promote economic development in underdeveloped countries, conduct market research, and lead diversity-training programs in schools, corporations, and community organizations. Anthropologists also study our human origins, excavating and analyzing the bones, artifacts,



**FIGURE 1.2** Anthropology's scope is global. Anthropologists' research spans issues as diverse as (top left) the needs of pregnant women in Guinea, West Africa; right, the plight of Brazilian street children; bottom left, the struggles of migrant farmworkers in central Florida.

and DNA of our ancestors from millions of years ago to gain an understanding of who we are and where we've come from.

Sixty percent of anthropologists today work in *applied anthropology*—that is, they work outside of academic settings to apply the strategies and insights of anthropology directly to current world problems. Even many of us who work full time in a college or university are deeply involved in public applied anthropology.

### Anthropology's Unique Approach

Anthropology today retains its core commitment to understanding the richness of human diversity. Specifically, anthropology challenges us to move beyond **ethnocentrism**—the strong human tendency to believe that one's own culture or way of life is normal, natural, and superior to the beliefs and practices of others. Instead, as we will explore throughout this book, the anthropologist's toolkit of research strategies and analytical concepts enables us to appreciate, understand, and engage the diversity of human cultures in an increasingly global age. To that end, anthropology has built upon the key concerns of early generations to develop a set of characteristics unique among the social sciences.

**ethnocentrism:** The belief that one's own culture or way of life is normal and natural; using one's own culture to evaluate and judge the practices and ideals of others.