**SYLLABUS—ANTH 4701  
The Anthropology of American Gun Culture  
Fall 2020**

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***NOTE: COVID-19 Concerns***

**Watch this video on how to return to in-person learning classrooms:** [**http://vpaa.unt.edu/return**](http://vpaa.unt.edu/return)

### COVID-19 Impact on Attendance

While attendance is expected, it is important for all of us to be mindful of the health and safety of everyone in our community, especially given concerns about COVID-19. Please contact me if you are unable to attend class because you are ill, or unable to attend class due to a related issue regarding COVID-19. *It is necessary that you communicate with me prior to being absent so I may make a decision about accommodating your request to be excused from class.*

If you are experiencing any [symptoms of COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) (https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) please seek medical attention from the Student Health and Wellness Center (940-565-2333 or [askSHWC@unt.edu](mailto:askSHWC@unt.edu)) or your health care provider PRIOR to coming to campus. UNT also requires you to contact the UNT COVID Hotline at 844-366-5892 or [COVID@unt.edu](mailto:COVID@unt.edu) for guidance on actions to take due to symptoms, pending or positive test results, or potential exposure. While attendance is an important part of succeeding in this class, your own health, and those of others in the community, is more important.

### Statement on Face Covering

Face coverings are required in all UNT facilities. Students are expected to wear face coverings during this class. If you are unable to wear a face covering due to a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Access to request an accommodation. UNT face covering requirements are subject to change due to community health guidelines. Any changes will be communicated via the instructor.

# Information

ANTH 4701 is a 3-credit seminar that meets bi-weekly MW. The course uses *CANVAS* to manage course materials.

## Instructor Contact Information

* Kevin Caffrey, Director, McNair Scholars Program (*kevin.caffrey@unt.edu*)

## Course Description

This course will investigate American Gun Culture as a topic of study most appropriate for the tools of anthropological analysis. Taking up the analytical (as opposed to popular) concepts of culture, ritual, sacrifice, and sacrality, we will examine: the contested history of guns in America; the evolving meanings attached to guns throughout the changing arc of American society; the structural realities that gun policy activists of all varieties mobilize to their causes; and the substance of a recent emerging paradigm conceiving of guns as being most properly an issue of public health. The course will not be an exercise in anti-gun activism, nor one in pro-gun enthusiasm.

## Materials

There are no required textbooks, and any required reading for the course will be emailed to you.

## Minimum Technical Skills Needed

* This course uses Canvas. There is a guide: <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>.
* All work will be submitted as a Microsoft Word file, preferably in the .docx file format.

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# ASSESSMENT & GRADING

## Assessments

Course assignments are in the form of short papers. The course site will list all assignments, as well as their instructions and due dates.

## Grading

The grade of A signifies superior work beyond basic requirements of the assignment; B signifies adequate work in response to the requirements; and C signifies work that meets some but not all of the requirements; D signifies work that meets few of the requirements; and F signifies the work is not acceptable for the assignment.

## Assignments and Points Towards Final Grade

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assignments** (may be altered according to flow of course)  (6-8 pages, 12pt font) | **Points Possible** | **Contribution to Final Grade** |
| Argument Paper: What is “gun culture” and why do you *think* so? | 30 | 30% |
| Is American Gun Culture a problem, a strength/feature, neither, or both? | 30 | 30% |
| Argument Analysis Paper and presentation: Book critique to be determined together with Dr. Caffrey? (Book to be assigned) | 40 | 40% |
| Report Paper: An informative, researched, report on some aspect of guns and U.S. society (exact topic to be settled on in conversation with Dr. Caffrey) | *25* | *25%* |
| **Total for non-honors** | **100** | **100%** |
| **Total for honors** | **125** |  |

# COURSE POLICIES

## Responsibilities

* Attend every class meeting
* Prepare for class meetings by doing the assigned reading, if there is assigned reading
* Actively engage with other students, instructors, and/or lecturers during class to contribute to collaborative learning
* Complete the assignments on time.

## Acceptable Student Behavior and Academic Integrity Policies

All UNT students are assumed to be adults and do not really need to be told what acceptable behavior is. However, UNT’s Code of Student Conduct, if you need a refresher, can be found at <https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>. You must also abide by the Student Academic Integrity Policy (<http://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>). I have no tolerance for plagiarism, and I assume you understand these standards and policies.

## Attendance

This course meets Monday and Wednesday 2-3:20pm. Attendance is required. I will excuse absences for the obvious set of reasons if arranged beforehand. (The UNT Attendance and Absences policy is at: <http://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-039>.)

## ADA Policy

UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. For additional information, see the ODA website at <http://disability.unt.edu/>.

## Student Academic Support Services

* [Academic Resources:](https://www.unt.edu/academics) where to buy textbooks and supplies, access academic catalogs and programs, register for classes, and more
* [Counseling and Testing Services:](http://studentaffairs.unt.edu/counseling-and-testing-services) provides counseling services to the UNT community, as well as testing services; such as admissions testing, computer-based testing, career testing, and other tests
* [UNT Libraries:](http://www.library.unt.edu/) library services
* [UNT Learning Center:](https://learningcenter.unt.edu/home) provides a variety of services, including tutoring, to enhance the student academic experience
* [UNT Writing Center:](http://writingcenter.unt.edu/) offers free writing tutoring to all UNT students, undergraduate and graduate
* [Succeed at UNT:](https://success.unt.edu/) information regarding how to be a successful student at UNT

**Weekly Readings:**

Week 1 8/24/2020

-- article “Guns, identity, and nationhood”

Week 2 8/31

-- Chapter selection from Gun Guys by Dan Baum

-- article “The Americans Who Stockpile Guns”

-- article “Why Are White Men Stockpiling Guns?”

Week 3 9/7

-- Chapter selection from Gun Guys by Dan Baum

Week 4 9/14

-- article “‘I DON’T DIAL 911’—American Gun Politics and the Problem of Policing”

-- article “Gun Culture Is My Culture. And I Fear for What It Has Become”

-- article “Guns and Gender”

-- article “Gunspeak—The Influence of America’s Gun Culture on Everyday Communication”

**Paper #1 prompt:** What is—or might be—Gun Culture?

Week 5 9/21

-- article “Panopticism” from Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison”

-- article “Why the officers who shot and killed Breonna Taylor may never be arrested”

Week 6 9/28

-- article “What guns mean: the symbolic lives of firearms”

-- article “The psychology of guns: risk, fear, and motivated reasoning”

-- Reread article “Guns, identity, and nationhood”

-- article “What Gun Owners Really Want I’ve owned six guns. I’ve drawn them on bad guys. I want to be understood.”

Week 7 10/5

-- article “Good Guys with Guns: From Popular Sovereignty to Self-Defensive Subjectivity”

Week 8 10/12

-- article “A Common Thread Among Young-Earth Creationists, Gun Enthusiasts, Marriage Exclusivists, and the 1%”

-- article “Blood on their hands': the intelligence officer whose warning over white supremacy was ignored”

-- article “The Gun Massacre Totem in American Culture”

-- article “When Was the Last Time American Children Were So Afraid?”

-- article “New Zealand’s ban on assault rifles met with support across the country”

**Paper #2 prompt:** What do we gain from American Gun Culture?  How do we gain it?  If you wish to argue, however, that we gain nothing, then argue how this is.

(NOTE:  This may sound like I am trying to get you to accept as a positive something many of you think of as primarily a negative.  I am not trying to do this.  Partly, I am trying to get you to exercise your minds by keeping apparently contradictory ideas in your head at the same time, and partly I am trying to get you to be intellectual attack dogs.) Ask questions if you have them.

Week 9 10/19

-- article “The TSA is in the Business of ‘Security Theater,’ Not Security

-- article “Beyond Security Theater”

-- Chapter selection from Beyond Fear by Bruce Schneier

Week 10 10/26

-- article “Law Professor: Rioting and Looting Prove Second Amendment Not Outmoded or Anachronistic”

-- article “The Right to Armed Self-Defense in the Light of Law Enforcement Abdication”

Week 11 11/2

-- article “An Anthropology of Security and Rights”

Week 12 11/9

-- article “TBA”

**Assignment #3**: Book Critique and presentation—book to be chosen in conversation with professor

Week 13 11/16

-- article “TBA”

**Honors Assignment**: ‘Hat Trick’ Research Report Paper: An informative, researched, report on some meaningful aspect of guns and U.S. society (exact topic to be drawn out of a hat at random)

Week 14 11/23

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15 11/30

-- presentations

Week 16 12/7

-- Presentations