

Spring 2010

Department of Anthropology

Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

How to Write a Critical Book Review

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Pre-writing: Takes notes while reading about the topics, issues, problems and institutions – marriage, family, religion, political and economic institutions (and any others that interest you) Describe how you would react to some of the things you describe if you were to live in this society for a year.

of the culture discussed in the ethnography and those topics which interest you the most.

I. Introduction Tell your readers what you are going to write about and why you selected these particular topics. Write a clear statement of the thesis, focus, issue or problem the ethnographer investigated. Tell your readers the ethnographer's stated implied goals of the ethnography and how the ethnographer intends to meet these goals.

II. Overview—provide a brief overview of the culture under consideration i.e. name, location, size, environment, subsistence system and all other important components of the culture i.e. religion, marriage, kinship, political organization and other features unique to the culture

III. Provide an overview of the book that is based on a chapter by chapter survey (summary) of the contents of the ethnography and note main focus, issue(s) and important points of each chapter. Evaluate how well the chapters support the stated or implied goal(s) of the ethnography.

III. Discuss what you think are the most important issues of the ethnography and relate them to your own culture

IV. What are the differences between your life and the lives of people discussed in the ethnography?

V. Pick one institution of the culture that interests you the most i.e. marriage, economy, political, religion, childrearing, kinship, and any other cultural institution and describe in some detail and make comparisons with your own culture.

VI. How did the ethnography help you understand more deeply something about the culture under consideration? How did the ethnography help you understand more deeply something about your own culture?

VII. Describe how you would react to some of the things you describe if you were to live in this society for a year. Tell what you learned about yourself and your own society from studying these people.