UNIVERSIDADE LUSÍADA
LISBOA

Course Unit Program
Anthropology of Complex Societies

Academic Year 2025/2026

1. Organic Unit

Higher Institute of Social Work

2. Course

SOCIAL WORK

3. Cycle

1st

4. Course Unit

Anthropology of Complex Societies (L4501)

5. Scientific Area

6. Curricular Year

1st

7. Type of Curricular Unit / Semester

1st Semester

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8. Class type and workload (work time)

Theoretical classes:	30,00
Practical classes:	
Theoretical-Practical Classes	
Tutorial Guidance:	20,00

9. ECTS Credits

6,00

10. Scientific Area Coordinator

11. Regent

Prof. Doutor MICHEL GUSTAVE JOSEPH BINET

12. Assistants

13. Teaching Language

Portuguese

14. General Objectives

-Break away from the naturalization of its own enculturation process, an epistemological obstacle and source of ethnocentrism
-Deconstruct and objectify cultural self-evidences, through the "deviation" through cultural alterity
-Discover digital anthropology and netnography
-Discover our condition as cultural beings and its relevance for Social Work
-To sensitize students to the (re)knowledge of cultural diversity

15. Specific Objectives

-Break away from the "naturalizing attitude" (A. Schütz) and re-perspective their daily life as a terrain of multiple observations of « culture in action »
-Discover the phenomena of cultural variation in complex societies and deconstruct the assumption of « monocultural uniformity »
-Recognize anthropology as a co-discipline accompanying and nurturing the scientificization of Social Work, with emphasis on the contributions of ethnographic research
-Promote knowledge exchange between both are

16. Skills to be acquired

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-Understand the applicability of anthropological knowledge in the professional practice of social workers. Examples: the Genogram and the Ecomap
-Perspective of the emic approach as a methodological, epistemic, and ethical foundation of empathy in Social Work
-Know how to manage the diversity of versions of a given "reality"
-Know how to analyze the documentary value of photographs (Visual Ethnography)
-Know how to convert social networks into a field of anthropological study (Netnography)

17. Teaching Methodology

-Alternation of expositions (theoretical classes) and knowledge application exercises (tutorial classes).
-Theoretical classes consist of expositions by the professor that articulate syllabus contents and reference bibliography.
-Tutorial classes are centered on group exercises and students' presentations framed by the teacher.

18. Course Unit Program

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1. History of Anthropology and Social Work: a first introduction
1.1. A forerunner of both areas: Joseph-Marie de Gérando (1772-1842)

2. Science, politics and society: Epistemic and ethical-political self-critical stance in Anthropology and Social Work
2.1. Definitions of the object of study of anthropology: the concept of « culture »
2.2. The decolonization of anthropology: a production of knowledge at the service of whom and in favor of what project of society?
2.2.1. Colonial administration and forced racialization: Symbolic and political violence of « racism »
2.2.2. Declaration of a Principle of Equality in Dignity of All Human Cultures: Anthropological Critique of Western-Centrism in the Human Sciences and the Fight Against Racism Through Science
2.3. Scientism and disciplinary control of populations

3. Human and social science in three stages (Lévi-Strauss)
3.1. Local ethnography
3.1.1. The «Monographic» ambition of the field researcher: Holism and ethnographic details (Mauss / Van Gennep)
3.1.2. Method and Scope of Participant Observation (Bronislaw Malinowski)
3.1.3. Self-Ethnographies
3.2. Regional ethnology
3.2.1. Specialization by civilizational areas: Africanists / Americanists / Europeanists / etc.
3.3. General Anthropology
3.3.1. The Universals of Human Behavior

4. Some theories and constructions of objects of study in Anthropology: the sociocultural complexity revealed by the theoretical lens of anthropology
4.1. Diffusionism
4.1.1. A paradigm little mentioned today but still present
4.2. Evolutionism
4.2.1. From Unilinear Evolutionism to Plurilinear Doubly Regional Evolutionism
4.3. Functionalism
4.3.1. The functional theory of culture (Malinowski) and its critical revisions
4.4. Structuralism
4.4.1. The "greatest discovery of the French sociological school": Durkheim and Mauss read by Lévi-Strauss
4.5. Culture and Personality
4.5.1. Ethnopsychiatry

5. The figures of otherness: constructions and deconstructions of « social categories » mobilized and reified in observation
5.1. The « wild »

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5.1.1. Studying the « civilized » by deconstructing an excluding and hierarchical concept of « civilization »
5.2. The "poor"
5.2.1. Studying the classes that accumulate wealth and power and their strategies for the intergenerational reproduction of their privileges
5.2.2. The ritualization of power inequalities and social order (Balandier / Rivière / Bromberger)
5.3. The «feminine» and the «masculine»
5.3.1. Study and question the sexual division of labor and the relations of domination between genders
5.3.2. The Queer Theory : deconstruction of gender identity binarism
5.4. The "Disabled"
5.4.1. Social studies of disability and the break with normalocentrism

6. Attempts to classify types of society
6.1. So-called traditional societies
6.2. So-called complex societies
6.2.1. Societies in the digital age. New terrains, new research methods: netnography

7. Relevance of anthropological concepts in Social Work
7.1. Total social phenomena
7.2. Rite
7.3. Immaterial culture and classification systems
7.4. Material culture
7.5. Kinship: the genogram (Hartman)
7.5.1. Diversity of family types
7.6. Ethnicity and Identity: the boundaries of groups (Barth)

8. Actuality and scope of anthropology in Social Work: examples
8.1. Children's cultures: breaking away from adult-centrism to intervene in the field of child and youth protection
8.2. Homo Ludens : from the study of games to punch-sport intervention
8.3. Homo Narrans: The narrative construction of biographies in the field of social work
8.4. «Bairrismos, Clubismos, Neotribalismos, Nationalismos» : the strength of identity dynamics
8.5. The symbolic economy of the gift and the critique of utilitarianism : Reading Marcel Mauss
8.6. Social worker profession and inquiring practices : a fundamental affinity between Social Work and Anthropology

19. Assessment Methods

-A group work related to the application exercises carried out in the tutorial classes (visual ethnography, genogram and netnography).
-Two written tests.
-Students' participation throughout the semester in initiatives and events conducted by the school will be taken into account within the scope of continuous assessment, in accordance with the Assessment Regulations.

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20. Didactic Resources

Bibliographic Base (Zotero)

21. Sustainability Objectives

Train social workers committed to fighting inequalities and their causes (SDG 10 & 8), mobilized to, through partnerships (SDG 17), eradicate poverty and hunger (SDG 1 & 2), in favor of a community inclusive and anti-oppressive (SDG 5), is to contribute through education (SDG 4), as a professor in charge of this UC, to reinforce a professional class committed to justice and peace (SDG 16), in an eco-responsible society (green social service : ODS 3, 6, 12, 13, 14 & 15).

22. Keywords

Anthropology
Complexity
Culture
Social service

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23. Main Bibliography

Author(s):	Manuela Ivone Cunha		
Title:	Cultura, diversidade, diferenciação. Um guia elementar		
Edition:		Year:	2016
Local:	Braga		
Publisher:	CICS.NOVA.UMinho		

Author(s):	Ralph Linton		
Title:	O homem: uma introdução à antropologia		
Edition:	12	Year:	1987
Local:	São Paulo		
Publisher:	Martins Fontes		

Author(s):	Bela Feldman-Bianco		
Title:	Antropologia das sociedades contemporâneas: Métodos		
Edition:		Year:	1987
Local:	São Paulo		
Publisher:	Global		

24. Complementary Bibliography

Author(s):	Daniel Cefaï & Édouard Gardella		
Title:	L'urgence sociale en action: Ethnographie du Samusocial de Paris		
Edition:		Year:	2011
Local:	Paris		
Publisher:	La Découverte		

Author(s):	Ulf Hannerz		
Title:	Exploring the City: Inquiries toward an Urban Anthropology		
Edition:	1	Year:	1980
Local:	New York		
Publisher:	Columbia University Press		

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