

# ANT 250: Tattooing and Human Nature



Spring 2020 / Lectures: Mon/Wed 3:30-4:45 / ten Hour 353

**Dr. Christopher Lynn**

Email: [cdlynn@ua.edu](mailto:cdlynn@ua.edu)

Website: <http://cdlynn.people.ua.edu/>

Office: 12 ten Hour

Hours: Mon/Wed 3-4PM or by appt

## Classroom Conduct

I enforce an electronics-free classroom. Leave your phones hidden in your backpacks and in airplane mode or turned off. Leave your laptops and tablets at home. If you text in my class, check your social media, or engage in any other rude and unseemly behavior, I'll ask you to leave class; and you'll be marked as absent. I'm very active on social media and my phone too (and you may follow me, whereupon I will follow you back—I'm always promoting something), but I will only bring my phone to class because DUO forces me to have access to it. If you need an exception made, please see me and I will consider it.

**ANT 250 Course Description:** This course provides an introduction to body modification through the lens of tattooing. Today, one in four Americans has at least one tattoo, and peoples of the world have been tattooing for over 5500 years, based on evidence of tattooed mummies found throughout the world. Yet tattooing can be a health risk, even in an era of improved hygiene and sanitation. This course explores body use from the 4-field anthropological perspective—biological, cultural, linguistic, and archaeological—with a special focus on tattooing. Students will write short commentaries on readings, discussions, films, and classroom experientials over the course of the semester and develop a personal project as the culminating course experience. Projects will be developed inside and outside of class and can be any format.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** By the end of this term, you should be able to:

1. Outline multiple explanations for why humans modify their bodies (and tattoo in particular).

2. Communicate about biological, cultural, linguistic, and archaeological evidence for tattooing in antiquity and the modern world.
3. Explain to a lay audience how and why tattooing can serve important biological and sociocultural functions.
4. Compose a portfolio that tracks one's personal learning experience over the course of a semester.
5. Produce a project using a chosen format (writing, video, audio, etc.) to convey an anthropological perspective about a type of body modification.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

### **Required Texts**

Sean Mallon and Sebastián Galliot (2018), *Tatau: A History of Samoan Tattooing*, University of Hawaii Press.

Articles will be available in a course packet from the Supe Store or for download via a Box folder.

### **Blackboard**

This course will use Blackboard to distribute additional material. Access Blackboard via myBama. There is a box called Blackboard on the Academics tab that should list your courses that are currently let up with Blackboard.

We will also use Blackboard to turn in all assignments. I **STRONGLY** recommend you set up Blackboard to send you email notifications when things are posted, updated, due, or have been graded. To do this, follow these instructions:

1. Log in to Blackboard.
2. Toggle the arrow next to your name at the upper right hand corner of your screen.
3. Select "Settings" at the bottom of the screen that appears.
4. Select "Edit Notification Settings."
5. Select this course from the list.
6. Under "2. Settings," check the box above Email so it notifies you when any actions are taken.
7. Be sure to click the "Submit" button to save these settings.

### **Attendance**

I will not keep attendance, but you will be expected to reflect on classroom lectures and readings in the portfolio that constitutes the majority of your grade. While I prefer to be flexible about the demands of student life and the difficulty sometimes of attending every single class, I will assign grades by assessing individual student capabilities and effort. If you cannot attend a session of the class, please let me know. However, you will be responsible for finding out about the material covered, and it will be obvious in your reflections which lectures you were about to attend and from which you were absent.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Activities**

**Body modification interview exercise**

Interview a body modification practitioner. The purpose of this assignment is to learn what an expert in body modification has to say about their experience conducting or receiving body modifications. The person can be a family member, friend, business owner, body modification enthusiast you want an excuse to talk to, or someone else who you think would be interesting to interview and who agrees to do so. You must avoid use of any identifying information in your write-up (i.e., do not include the interviewee's name). The interview must be with a legal adult (i.e., age 18 or older) and who is mentally able to consent to interview. This assignment is designed as a course learning exercise rather than research. The interview should not be recorded (if this were for research purposes, the interview would typically be recorded, transcribed, and analyzed). You must craft at least five questions in advance of your interview (e.g., about the person's body modification experiences, the meaning of those experiences, how those experiences can be situated within broad course themes such as the history of body modification, etc.). You will need to turn in the list of questions prepared for the interview along with a 400-500 word essay describing your interview, including some of the central substance of the interviewee's responses and interpretations of these responses.

### **Body modification movie exercise**

Watch a film or documentary of your choice that is at least one hour in length and features body modification. Examples include *Whole* (exploring individuals who feel the need to become amputees), *Dances Sacred and Profane* (about the "modern primitives" movement), or *Memento* (about a man who tattoos himself with messages to replace long-term memory). Here is a link to some of the best reviewed body modification movies, though you can likely find others: <https://scene360.com/art/78201/body-modification-tattoo-movies/>. Please submit a 2-3 page summary, double-spaced, in 12-point font that addresses the following elements:

- a) describe the movie and body modification featured in it
- b) describe the main character(s)
- c) describe the key themes (e.g., trauma, social cohesion, catharsis, utilitarianism, attractiveness, individuality, etc.) highlighted in the film/documentary via body modification
- d) interpret at least two of those themes in light of broader course concepts and examples.

### **Behavioral observation exercise**

Visit a facility where you can observe some kind of body modification (tattoo, piercing, threading, henna, tanning, dentistry, cosmetic surgery, etc.) where you can observe some type of body modification. Please submit a 2-3 page summary, double-spaced, in 12-point font that addresses the following elements:

- a) describe the body modification and facility you are observing
- b) describe any interactions between individuals involved in the focal body modification activity, including client and customer and what the context is
- c) describe the other people in the context or setting
- d) interpret the patterns found (e.g., why do the individuals/groups behave the way they do)

- e) discuss the history of the focal body modification (which may entail Internet or scholarly search).

**Portfolio**

There are no exams in this course. Instead, you will keep a journal/portfolio about the course and your learning experience in the course. Every few weeks, you will be expected to compose a reflection about the week’s lectures, readings, films, or experientials. Each reflection should be approximately 350-500 words. You will turn them in via Blackboard on the dates due to ensure you stay on track and also collect them in a portfolio binder to be turned in at the end of the semester. Prompts will be provided via Blackboard.

**Final Project**

During the last week of the course and/or finals week, each student will present a final project to the class. The format of the project is open, but some possibilities include a term paper, article for popular audience, video blog series, podcasts, art exhibit, or performance/play. You may be as creative as you like or fall back on traditional writing if you prefer. The goal is to investigate an aspect of body modification that is of interest to you and show evidence of your investigation and effort. You will have 15-20 minutes for your final presentation. Your presentation must demonstrate evidence of (1) intellectual merit or scholarship (you must have some evidence of the reading and exploration you have done), (2) public impacts (how your project is important to the world at large, whether locally, nationally, internationally, etc.), and (3) attention to detail (you must show attention to detail, practice, and effort).

**GRADING POLICY**

WEEKLY REFLECTIONS	=	20%
ACTIVITIES	=	30%
PORTFOLIO	=	30%
FINAL PROJECT	=	20%
		100%

**Grades are assigned on the following scale:**

≥100% A+	99-93% A	89-87% B+	86-83% B	82-80% B-	79-77% C+
76-73% C	72-70% C-	69-67% D+	66-63% D	62-60% D-	≤59% F

**OUTLINE OF TOPICS\***

Week/Date	Day: Topic/Activity	Readings	Assignment due
WEEK 0 1/8	W: First, tattoo your mouth	Lynn “Untangling tattoos’ influence on immune response”	
WEEK 1 1/13	M: Techniques of the body	Crossley 2005, Rush ch 1	

1/15	W: <i>Modify</i> video	Rush ch 2	
WEEK 2 1/20	M: Tattooing in antiquity	Gilbert “Ancient History”	
1/22	W: <i>Ötzi</i> film	Deter-Wolf et al “World’s Oldest Tattoos”	
WEEK 3 1/27	M: Sailors and tattoos around the world	Dye 1989, Govenar 1992, Webb 1982	
1/29	W: Navigator Islands and Samoan tattooing	Mallon & Galliot ch 1 & 2	
WEEK 4 2/6	M: Tattooing in the Pacific	Gell ch 1 & 2	
2/8	W: <i>Ancient Ink</i> video	Friedman 2017, Pankova 2017	
WEEK 5 2/13	M: Native American and colonial tattooing	Wallace 2013, Balvay 2008	
2/15	W: In-class reflections and project brainstorming		
WEEK 6 2/20	MLK Day No Class		
2/22	W: 19 <sup>th</sup> and 20 <sup>th</sup> century tattooing history ( <i>Tattoo Nation</i> )	DeMello ch 2, Caplan 1997	
WEEK 7 2/27	M: Marking culture	Fisher 2002, Heppell et al 2005	
2/29	W: Tattooing and stigma	Swami & Furnham 2007, Wohlrab et al 2009	
WEEK 8 3/2	M: Biological mechanisms of tattooing	Sperry 1991 (pt 1), Baranska et al 2018, Collin 2018	
3/4	W: Tattooing and disease	Ludvico & Kurland 1995, Kluger & Kolijonen 2012, Sperry 1992 (pt 2)	
WEEK 9 3/9	M: In-class reflections and project brainstorming		
3/11	W: <i>Mark of Cain</i> video	Edgerton & Dingman, Schrader 2000	
WEEK 10 3/16 3/18	SPRING BREAK		
WEEK 11 3/23	M: How to tattoo: Handpoke tattoo demo	Angel 2017	
3/25	W: Testing immune response of tattooing	Lynn et al 2016, Lynn et al 2018, Lynn et al 2019	
WEEK 12 3/30	M: Guild system and Samoan diaspora	Mallon & Galliot ch 3	

4/1	W: Aiga Sulu'ape and 2 <sup>nd</sup> tattoo renaissance	Rubin 1988, Hardy 2000, DeMello ch 3	
WEEK 13 4/6	M: Interaction around tatau	Mallon & Galliot ch 4	
4/8	W: Revitalization around the Pacific	Tricia Allen interview, Kuwuhara ch 1 & 4, Mallon & Galliot ch 5	
WEEK 14 4/13	M: Tattooing and gender	Atkinson "Pretty in Pink," Osterud 2009	
4/15	W: Tattoos in the marketplace	Timming 2017, Vukelj 2005	
WEEK 15 4/20	M: Tattooing and postmodernism	Sullivan 2001, Mallon "Against Tradition," Pitts 1998	
4/22	FINAL PRESENTATIONS		
4/30, 7-9:30 PM	FINAL PRESENTATIONS		

\*Subject to change.

## OTHER COURSE MATERIAL

### Policy on Missed Coursework

1. If you miss a lecture, you'll have to get notes from classmates. That is on you to arrange. You will still be responsible for reading and posting reflections on the reading and lectures in your portfolio to the best of your ability.
2. Final presentations will be scheduled in advance. These presentations are given to your classmates, so other arrangements will not be made except in rare and likely terrible circumstances (deaths, surgeries, etc. do warrant consideration). If you miss your scheduled final presentation, you will receive a 0 for that presentation.
3. While I don't keep attendance as a matter of course, excessive absences will result in lower evaluation of your portfolio. This is because discussion in class and with classmates should be part of your process, so there should be evidence of it in your portfolio. Furthermore, you will be penalized if you miss the presentations of other students because it is rude.

### Undergraduate Research

I take new students into the Human Behavioral Ecology Research Group (HBERG) every semester who are interested in getting involved in the kind of research I conduct and which is related to this course. Learn more about HBERG activities here: <http://cdlynn.people.ua.edu/hberg.html>. To apply to work with me, fill out the form at this portal: <http://cdlynn.people.ua.edu/join-us.html>.

## Bibliography

- Angel, Gemma. 2017. "Recovering the Nineteenth-Century European Tattoo." *Ancient Ink: The Archaeology of Tattooing*:107.
- Atkinson, Michael. 2002. "Pretty in Ink: Conformity, Resistance, and Negotiation in Women's Tattooing." *Sex Roles* 47(5):219.
- Balvay, Arnaud. 2008. "Tattooing and its Role in French-Native American Relations in the Eighteenth Century." *French Colonial History* 9:1.
- Baranska, A., A. Shawket, M. Jouve, M. Baratin, C. Malosse, O. Voluzan, T. P. Vu Manh, F. Fiore, M. Bajenoff, P. Benaroch, M. Dalod, M. Malissen, S. Henri, and B. Malissen. 2018. "Unveiling skin macrophage dynamics explains both tattoo persistence and strenuous removal." *The Journal of experimental medicine* 215(4):1115.
- Caplan, Jane. 1997. "'Speaking scars': the tattoo in popular practice and medico-legal debate in nineteenth-century Europe." Pp. 107 in *History Workshop Journal*: Oxford University Press.
- Collin, Matthew. 2018. "Death, eaters, and dark marks." Rockefeller University Press.
- Crossley, Nick. 2005. "Mapping Reflexive Body Techniques: On Body Modification and Maintenance." *Body & Society* 11(1):1.
- DeMello, Margo. 2000. *Bodies of inscription: A cultural history of the modern tattoo community*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Deter-Wolf, Aaron, Benoît Robitaille, Lars Krutak, and Sébastien Galliot. 2016. "The world's oldest tattoos." *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 5:19.
- Dye, Ira. 1989. "The Tattoos of Early American Seafarers, 1796-1818." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 133(4):520.
- Edgerton, Robert B., and Harvey F. Dingman. 1963. "Tattooing and Identity." *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 9(2):143.
- Fisher, Jill A. 2002. "Tattooing the Body, Marking Culture." *Body & Society* 8(4):91.
- Friedman, Renée. 2017. "New Tattoos from Ancient Egypt." *Ancient Ink: The Archaeology of Tattooing*:11.
- Gell, Alfred. 1993. *Wrapping in images: Tattooing in Polynesia*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gilbert, Steve. 2000. *Tattoo history: A source book: An anthology of historical records of tattooing throughout the world*. New York; Berkeley, CA: Juno Books.
- Govenar, Alan. 2000. "The changing image of tattooing in American culture, 1846-1966." Pp. 212 in *Written on the body: The tattoo in European and American history*, edited by Jane Caplan. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hardy, Don Ed. 2000. "Current events." Pp. 197-207 in *The tattoo history sourcebook*, edited by Steve Gilbert. Berkeley, CA: Juno Books.
- Heppell, Michael, Limbang anak Melaka, and Enyan Anak Usen. 2005. *Iban art: Sexual selection and severed heads: Weaving, sculpture, tattooing and other arts of the Iban of Borneo*. Amsterdam: KIT Publishers.
- Kluger, Nicolas, and Virve Koljonen. 2012. "Tattoos, inks, and cancer." *The Lancet Oncology* 13(4):e161.
- Kuwuhara, Makiko. 2005. *Tattoo: an anthropology*: Berg Publishers.

- Ludvico, L. R., and J. A. Kurland. 1995. "Symbolic or not-so-symbolic wounds: The behavioral ecology of human scarification." *Ethology and Sociobiology* 16(2):155.
- Lynn, Christopher D, Michaela Howells, David Herdrich, Joseph Ioane, Duffy Hudson, and Su'a Tupuola U Fitiao. 2019a. "The evolutionary adaptation of body art: Tattooing as costly honest signaling of enhanced immune response in American Samoa." *American Journal of Human Biology*:e23347.
- Lynn, Christopher D. 2019. "Untangling tattoos' influence on immune response." in *The Conversation*.
- Lynn, Christopher D., Johnna T. Dominguez, and Jason A. Decaro. 2016. "Tattooing to "Toughen up": Tattoo experience and secretory immunoglobulin A." *American Journal of Human Biology* 28:603.
- Lynn, Christopher D., Taylor Puckett, Amanda Guitar, and Nicholas Roy. 2019b. "Shirts or Skins?: Tattoos as Costly Honest Signals of Fitness and Affiliation among US Intercollegiate Athletes and Other Undergraduates." *Evolutionary Psychological Science* (5):151-65.
- Mallon, Sean. 2010. "Against Tradition." *The Contemporary Pacific*:362.
- Mallon, Sean, and Sebastien Galliot. 2018. *Tatau: A history of Samoan tattooing*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Osterud, Amelia Klem. 2009. *The tattooed lady: a history*. Golden, CO: Speck Press.
- Pankova, SV. 2017. "Identifications of Iron Age Tattoos from the Altai-Sayan Mountains in Russia." *Ancient Ink: The Archaeology of Tattooing*:66.
- Pitts, Victoria. 2003. *In the flesh: The cultural politics of body modification*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rubin, Arnold. 1988. "The tattoo renaissance." Pp. 233 in *Marks of civilization: Artistic transformations of the human body*, edited by Arnold Rubin. Los Angeles: University of California Museum of Cultural History.
- Rush, John A. 2005. *Spiritual tattoo: A cultural history of tattooing, piercing, scarification, branding, and implants*. Berkeley, CA: Frog.
- Schrader, Abby M. 2000. "Branding the other/tattooing the self: Bodily inscription among convicts in Russia and the Soviet Union." *Written on the Body: The Tattoo in European and American History*. London: Reaktion Books:174-92.
- Sperry, K. 1991. "Tattoos and tattooing. Part I: History and methodology." *The American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology : Official Publication of the National Association of Medical Examiners* 12(4):313.
- Sperry, Kris. 1992. "Tattoos and Tattooing: Part II: Gross Pathology, Histopathology, Medical Complications, and Applications." *The American journal of forensic medicine and pathology* 13(1):7.
- Sullivan, Nikki. 2001. *Tattooed bodies: Subjectivity, textuality, ethics, and pleasure*: Praeger.
- Swami, Viren, and Adrian Furnham. 2007. "Unattractive, promiscuous and heavy drinkers: Perceptions of women with tattoos." *Body Image* 4(4):343.
- Vukelj, John. 2005. "Post no bills: can the NBA prohibit its players from wearing tattoo advertisements?" *Fordham Intellectual Property, Media and Entertainment Law Journal* 15(2):507.



- Wallace, Antoinette B. 2013. "Native American tattooing in the protohistoric southeast."  
Pp. 1 in *Drawing with great needles: Ancient tattoo traditions of North America*,  
edited by Aaron Deter-Wolf and Carol Diaz-Granados. Austin: University of  
Texas Press.
- Webb, Doc. 1985. "Sailors 'n' tattoos." *Tattootime* 1(3):3.
- Wohlrab, Silke, Bernhard Fink, Peter M. Kappeler, and Gayle Brewer. 2009.  
"Differences in Personality Attributions Toward Tattooed and Nontattooed  
Virtual Human Characters." *Journal of Individual Differences* 30(1):1.