

Syllabus

Business Anthropology

- **Instructor:** Davide Torsello (torsellod@ceu.edu), Office hours: Tuesday 11-13, N13 608
- **Credits:** 2 ECTS
- **Term:** 2017-2018
- **Course level:** [MA/MSc]
- **Prerequisites:** none

Course description

Business Anthropology is a flourishing sector in which anthropologists, who specialize in studying cultural and social differences, apply their knowledge, skills and research methods to improve business performance, competitiveness and communication. Business anthropologists are able to help corporations develop culturally appropriate ways of doing business with suppliers, business partners, or customers; promote smooth working relationships among employees from different cultures; develop specific strategies or products that respect or comply with local cultural expectations.

The most powerful research tool developed by anthropologists is called **ethnography**. Ethnography allows observing what people actually do and how they motivate their actions. When ethnographic research is taken into a business context, it can be used to gain insights into patterns of behavior that help businesses thrive and innovate.

Unlike a traditional market researcher, who asks specific, highly practical questions, anthropological researchers visit consumers, companies and organizations in their own environments to observe, listen, and interview in a non-directed way. By applying these skills business anthropology provides innovative and cost-cutting insights into local cultures, as well as a thorough understanding of behavioral motivations of actors from different cultural or social backgrounds.

Learning outcomes

Interpersonal Communication Skills

Students will be required to explain and interpret their viewpoints in a critical personal and small group environment.

Technology Skills

Students will hone their skills in making professional oral presentations and in participating in a simulation game.

Cultural Sensitivity and Diversity

Students will have increased understanding and acceptance of socio-cultural diversities of viewpoints in business and management. Emphasis in

Quantitative Reasoning

comparison of world regions will be extremely relevant.

In addition to qualitative case analyses, quantitative tools will be introduced to analyze cross-cultural data.

Critical Thinking

Students will be encouraged to question the applicability of theoretical models, as well as the value of quantitative and non-quantitative data and of case studies.

Ethics and Responsibility

Students will be motivated to consider the ethical limitations of management in particular when dealing with lack of integrity and power relations.

Management Knowledge and Skills

The course will develop a number of strategic management and business models by referring to cross-cultural practices.

Reading list

1. <http://www.inc.com/magazine/20030401/25306.html>
2. Reading: What is Business Anthropology, D. Torsello
3. The Lego case study: <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/b071990c-9d4c-11e3-a599-00144feab7de.html#axzz44I9HKL3a>

Assessment

A) Attending all sessions and active participation in discussions, role-plays, activities: 40%

B) Individual Written Assignment at the end of the course (60%)

You will have to summarize the most relevant aspect of the course for you through an imaginative case study (4 pages) in which you, as an anthropologist, convince a company of the value added of your consultancy. Your case tells the story of how you get the consultancy task and how you develop it through your work.

Course schedule and materials for each session

<p>Session 1</p>	<p>Course introduction: What is business anthropology?</p> <p>Topics: the development of anthropology applied to business, fields and main topics Methods: lecture, team activity</p> <p>Readings: Baba, M. Anthropology and Business. 2006. <i>Encyclopedia of Anthropology</i>. H. James Birx, Ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Pages 83-117.</p> <p>Aguilera, F. (1996). Is Anthropology Good for the Company? <i>American Anthropologist</i>, 98(4): 735-742.</p>
<p>Session 2</p>	<p>The ethnographic research method</p> <p>Topics: introducing the ethnographic methodology to business research, pros and cons, types of research Methods: lecture, cases Readings:</p> <p>Jordan, A. (2011). The importance of business anthropology: Its unique contribution. In R. G. Tian, D. Zhou, & A. van Marrewijk (Eds.), <i>Advanced readings in business anthropology</i> (pp. 19-27). Toronto: North American Business Press.</p> <p>Case 1: Fujitsu: Innovation of Working Style through Business Ethnography and Organizational Monitor</p>
<p>Session 3</p>	<p>Why culture matters?</p> <p>Topics: studying the fields in which culture is relevant to understand differences in managerial strategies, corporate values and decision-making Methods: lecture, simulation game Readings:</p> <p>Ferraro, G. P. (2006). <i>The Cultural Dimension of International Business</i>. 5th Ed., Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall</p>
<p>Session 4</p>	<p>Simulation game</p> <p>(Details to be announced by instructor)</p>

<p>Session 5</p>	<p>Local and global in business culture</p> <p>Topics: This session focuses on the intersection between global and local trends in business strategies. The first part of the lecture will provide guidance on theoretical models of globalization; the second will introduce case studies on the topic.</p> <p>Methods: lecture, cases</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Case 1. James L Watson. MacDonal’d’s go east “China’s big mac attack”. <i>Foreign Affairs</i>; May/Jun 2000; 79, 3</p> <p>Case 2. Paul G. Patterson, Jane Scott, Mark D. Uncles “How the local competition defeated a global brand: The case of Starbucks”. <i>Australasian Marketing Journal</i>, Volume 18, Issue 1, February 2010, Pages 41-47</p>
<p>Session 6</p>	<p>The organizational culture: changes and conflicts</p> <p>Topics: understanding the organizational cultures of companies from inside, perceiving changes and conflicts through an anthropological perspective</p> <p>Methods: lecture, cases</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>A. Argandona 2007. Anthropological and Ethical Foundations of Organization Theory. IESE Business School Working Paper</p> <p>Case2: B. Parmar 2012. A Framework for Improving Organizational Interventions. Harvard Business School Cases UV6403</p>
<p>Session 7</p>	<p>Innovation in consumption styles</p> <p>Topics: This session deals with the way tastes and preferences that lead to consumption practices are shaped according to cultural and social features. The success of several multinationals have been of perceiving and understanding in full how culture influence the taste of individuals, and how needs of new products can be developed through an accurate knowledge of cultural preferences.</p> <p>Methods: lecture, guest speaker: “Consumption and rituals in Japan”</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>Case 3: “Ethnographer within consumer research. A critical case study of consumer film festival”</p>

	McFarland, J. 2001. Margaret Mead Meets Consumer Fieldwork. Harvard Business Articles UO108C
Session 8	Evaluation and paper writing