Introduction for Faculty Colleagues

About the course
This course on history of anthropological theory is designed for anthropology and sociology students to learn about some of the major anthropological theories, perspectives, and developments. This course discusses the ways anthropological theories, perspectives, and methods have intertwined, from the early history of anthropology to the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, to understand and explain cultural diversities and similarities across the globe.

How Research Project assignment fits into the course
This assignment is the first requirement that asks the students to write a short position paper on a theory. During the term, students are required to submit a brief statement or question about the main idea for each required theoretical reading of the day. Also, at the end of the term, there will additional comparative writing assignments. Thus, this first assignment will make them be better prepared for the rest of the coursework.

Aims for the assignment
By doing this assignment, students will learn about one central objective in this course: extending their diversity of thought about anthropological theory. Students will:
- Explain one major anthropological theory, including one key assumption, question, methods, and central propositions.
- Write about key strengths, contributions, and limitations of an anthropological theory or theorist
- Present effectively and persuasively a theoretical position to their classmates.

Important features of the assignment
The writing assignment allows students to learn the importance of supporting a theoretical position with evidence and credible sources in context. Also, it allows them to realize that their classmates might have different positions with regards to the same theory. Detailed expectation guidelines and a grading rubric are provided to the students in this assignment.

Rubric
A grading rubric follows after the assignment.
Short Writing Assignment: Taking Position about Anthropological Theories (20 points)

**Learning Outcomes**

This assignment will give you the opportunity to learn effective short writing skills. You will learn how to construct a persuasive position paper. These are two practical skills that are transferable to your academic, professional and personal goals.

By doing this assignment, which includes a short writing report and a brief presentation to your classmates, you will be able to learn about one important objective in this course: extending your diversity of thought about anthropological theory. You will:

- Explain one major anthropological theory, including one key assumption, concept, theoretical question, methods, and central propositions.
- Discuss with your classmates about key strengths, contributions, and limitations of the major anthropological theory or theorist.
- Present effectively and persuasively a theoretical position to your classmates.

**Process**

1. At the beginning of the semester students will be randomly paired to take a position--agree or disagree--related to only one specific theoretical problem. The instructor will provide the key theoretical question.
2. One-on-one meetings will be arranged during office hours with each student to plan their individual position paper. One short reading assignment will be given by the instructor. Students will do relevant literature reviews add one more sources and come with their draft summaries, emailed to me (midris@elon.edu) at least two hours prior to our meeting.
3. You will write a 4 page long paper draft, double spaced, and each student will have a short 5 to 10 minute long in-class presentation (due: Tuesday, September 23) to explain their “agree” or “disagree” position.
4. Your draft paper will be uploaded to Moodle by the instructor so that one of your classmate and the instructor will be able to review your draft and provide you with feedback on issues related to the assumption, question, methods, criticisms or strengths, and views presented in your paper (Tuesday, September 30). Relevant and constructive feedback obtained through this process must be incorporated in your final submission.
5. You will submit an electronic copy of your final writing assignment, in Microsoft Word, by e-mail (midris@elon.edu) on Tuesday, October 7, by 10:00 a.m. the latest.
Key Taking Position Questions
What key assumption, methods, evidence and logic does Lewis Henry Morgan provide on his theory of cultural evolutionism indicating that the stages of “savagery, barbarism, and civilization” are connected with each other in a natural and necessary sequence of progress? Do you agree or disagree? Explain your position.

According to Franz Boas’ historical particularism theory, what are the fundamental and unproven assumptions of cultural evolution theory? Do you agree with Boas or do you disagree? Explain your position.

What holds a society together, according to Durkheim’s structural-functionalist theory? Do you agree or do you disagree? Explain your position.

What is your critique or support of Kroeber’s concept of culture as superorganic? He viewed:

- Inorganic as a lifeless form
- Organic as having a life, more than inorganic
- Culture as something that surpasses the inorganic and the organic, as “superorganic.”

Expectations
Your short writing assignment and presentation must examine all the following points:
- What is one key assumption the theorist is making?
- What is one key question the theorist is asking?
- What are the methods the theorist is using?
- What are two main strengths or main criticisms of the theory?

When writing the paper and presenting, remember that your target audience is your classmates. Answer the questions listed above as if you were explaining them to your classmates. Remember to use the reading materials of the course and the class discussions to help you make theoretical connections and explain your theoretical position.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rubric (20 points)</th>
<th>Very Successful</th>
<th>Somewhat successful</th>
<th>Unsuccessful or incomplete</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of Analysis (10 points)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifies and questions the validity of the key assumption made by the theorist</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifies and examines one key question asked by the theorist</td>
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<td>Examines the methods the theorist is using to support his/her argument</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addresses two main strengths and criticisms of the theory accurately</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of argument and presentation (5 points)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>How well the position paper is supported by evidence and reasoning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>How effectively and persuasively the position paper is presented to the classmates</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quality of writing and incorporation of feedbacks to in the final draft. Is the writing coherent and connected (5 points)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The writing is organized and coherent</td>
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<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>The final draft incorporates the feedback given by a classmate and the instructor, appropriately</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>The final paper follows the proper format and is flawless in grammar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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Note: Please let me know if you need any further guidance with this assignment. midris@elon.edu