Cultural Concepts Review Guide, Final Exam

Culture and Language
What is culture (we used several different definitions – think about any differences)? What do we mean when we say that it is learned, shared, symbolic, and integrated? Is culture purely a human trait? Why does culture exist? How does culture change? Where does most change originate? Explain the benefits of participant observation. How are the concepts of emic and etic analysis important? What strategy does Harris admit permeates his presentation of culture in the text? What is human language? How does it differ from other animals’ systems of communication? What capacities do apes have to learn aspects of human language? Why is language especially important to human cultures? Are some languages better than others (why or why not)? How do anthropologists study languages (hint: think about phonetics, morphology, phonemics, grammar and syntax, kinesics and proxemics, and paralanguage)? What can language tell you about culture (Sapir-Whorf, for example)? What are dialects, pidgins, and Creoles and how do they relate?

Key Terms:
ethnocentrism, culture-bound, enculturation, cultural relativism, universals, diffusion, enculturation, society, participant observation, emic and etic approaches, morphology, syntax, phonemes, morphemes, phonetics, phonemics, Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, sociolinguistics, proxemics, kinesics, paralanguage, pidgins, dialects, Creoles

Sex, Gender, and Reproduction
How are sex, orientation, and gender different? How and why do preindustrial societies differ from industrial ones in their care for infants and children, lactation practices, and timing of intercourse? What factors are likely to affect a woman’s fertility and fecundity? What was the world population during the Paleolithic? The Neolithic? What changed to cause such an increase? What factors do people use in determining the “optimal” size for their families? What problems have the maintenance of traditional family ideals caused as societies have modernized? What is the demographic transition and when does it occur? How many sexes does Harris say there are? How do other cultures view sex differently than in America (how will this influence our school and community environments?)? In what types of societies are there lesser amounts of gender stratification? Why? Greater? Why? Explain the Etoro and Sambia view of sexual roles.

Key Terms:
Gender, sex, amenorrhea, birth/death/fertility rate, fecundity, infanticide (direct and indirect), berdache, two-spirit

Subsistence and Economy
How is a group’s geographic environment going to affect its subsistence economy? What are the basic types of human subsistence adaptation and what sorts of societies might we expect to associate with each one (the cultural patterns we discussed in class)? What sorts of environments are associated with each adaptation? What are the benefits and drawbacks of each? Which subsistence style is the oldest? Which is the most recent? How is optimal foraging theory important to understanding hunter/gatherer people? What are economic systems, by definition? How have they been traditionally studied? How do societies differ in their specific application of economic principles (i.e. a hunter gather society pattern versus a pastoralist one)? What sort of exchange system uses money and what are some of money’s 6 special characteristics? What is the Kula and how does it exemplify trade for non-economic purposes?

Key Terms:
Foraging, band, horticulture, slash and burn, agriculture, pastoralism, optimal foraging theory, resource intensification, carrying capacity, agropastoralism, transhumance and nomadism, economy, reciprocity (generalized, balanced, and negative), market, redistribution, leveling mechanism, moka, potlatch, prestige economics, sedentism

Kinship, Descent, and Marriage
What is marriage? What functions does it serve? What do all marriages involve? What are endogamy, exogamy, and incest taboos; why do they exist (what are their functions)? Why do people get married? What can you tell me about the special cases of cousin marriage and same sex marriages? What are the functions of the various forms of marital exchange? What are the levirate and sororate? Why are they practiced? Which forms of marriage are most and least common? What is a family? What are the functions of the family? Why are some groups distinctly matrifocal? How many and what different forms can the family take? What are some of the disadvantages or advantages to each of the different forms of family structure? In what societies might we expect to see certain patterns of descent, marriage, and residence? Why?

Key Terms:
Pedigree symbols, descent group, bilateral, matrilineal, patrilineal, patrilocal, matrilocal, matrifocal, clan, lineage, moiety, totem, neolocality, nuclear family, extended family, unilineal descent, marriage, levirate, sororate, incest, exogamy, endogamy, ego, bridewealth, dowry, polygamy, polygyny, polyandry, group marriage, family, serial monogamy, kindred, kin, teknonomy, apical ancestor, demonstrated and stipulated descent, biological kin, cognatic descent
Political and Social Organization
What levels of political organization might be expected to be found among foragers, horticulturists, pastoralists, and urban societies? To what extent does stratification play a part in the lives of people at different levels of subsistence? In the absence of codified laws, how are disputes typically handled? How is order maintained in societies without law? Where might we expect to find “Big Men”? How is this position different from that of a chief or a headman? What is the function of a leopard skin chief, and in what society is he found? How do sodalities work to strengthen the ties of tribal units. What are some other sodalities? What are the five explanations for primitive warfare offered in the text? Compare and contrast the access to resources and power of chiefdoms and states. Remember differences between nations and states. What are the special characteristics of state-level government? How is social stratification achieved and legitimized within cultures? How did stratification emerge, or at least how is it suggested to have emerged? In what sort of societies might we find a peasant class? How are class and caste systems different and/or similar?

Key Terms:
Band, Tribe, Chiefdom, State, law, Big Man, Village Head/Headman, Chief, Paramount Chief, sodality, common interest association, ascribed and achieved status, stratification, age set and grade, Class and caste

Psychology, Art, and Religion
How did Freud influence early psychological anthropology? Was he right, according to the work of later anthropologists? What is schema theory and what are its implications to learning new material (in a class or as a member of society)? What evidence is there for and against the idea of national character? What are the origins and functions of ethnic psychoses? How do dreams influence people? Focus on the functions of religion, animism vs. animatism, the various religious specialists (priests, shamans, etc.), and witches and witchcraft. Why don’t many societies have a word for religion and/or art? What are cults and revitalizations as defined by Wallace? Examples of them? What is art? Aesthetic – is it a culture-bound term?, What are the categories of art we discussed? Explain some of the ties between art and religion. What are the stages of trancing and how are they represented in rock art from around the world? From what we see in rock art, is there some common “astral plane” that people are reaching – why or why not? What is the tie between body modification and status (with examples)? Explain the relationship between tales, myths, legends, and epics.

Key Terms:
Personality, schema theory, national character, ethnic psychoses, Windigo, Pibloktoq, vision quest, priest, shaman, medicine man, animatism, animism, magic, ritual, myth, sorcery, witch, mana, contagious and sympathetic magic, rite of passage, cult, Ghost Dance, Cargo Cult, taboo, tale, myth, legend, epic, entopic, iconic, construal, aesthetic

Culture Change and the Role of Anthropology
Consider the effects that Western encroachment have had on traditional peoples. How have people dealt with the mechanisms of culture change and reacted to them? How have anthropologists added to the modernization of third world countries? Do you think it is good or bad, and why? How do cultures change? How much of a culture’s elements were said by Linton to have been truly original? Where did the rest come from? Get a feel for the growth rate of the planet (by region) and what anthropology has to say about it.

Key Terms:
Innovation, Diffusion, Syncretism, Assimilation, Acculturation, Ethnicity, Ethnic Boundary Markers, Nation, Genocide, Ethnic Homogenization, Globalization
Cultural Concepts Essay Questions: Final Exam

You will be given 5 of the following essays to choose from and will write on any 3 of them.

1. A crucial decision that needs to be made before entering fieldwork is whether to use emic analysis, etic analysis, or both. In your essay, please 1) define these two terms, 2) Discuss the benefits and hindrances of emic versus etic analysis, and 3) provide at least one well-explained example of how emic or etic approaches might interpret the same cultural practice.

2. A key concept in this unit (and class) has been the nature of culture and the dichotomy between ethnocentric and culturally relative approaches. In your essay, 1) define these two terms, 2) Discuss which is considered more “desirable” and why, and 3) provide at least one well-explained example of how an ethnocentric or relative approach might affect a cultural contact situation.

3. What was the world population during the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods? Why did it change? What are some of the additional things that begin to change in human culture during this shift? What was the likely impact on family size as a result of these shifts?

4. Explain the concept of “Demographic Transition”, its effects on a society, and where & why we expect to see this phenomena occur.

5. Define, then compare and contrast the three types of reciprocity. Additionally, please explain in what types of cultures we might expect to see each and why.

6. How does Marvin Harris explain the shifts in human society in his article “Life Without Chiefs?”

7. Compare and contrast egalitarian, class-based, and caste-based societies. Name one example culture that practies each type of social stratification and explain how its particular form of stratification functions.

8. What are cults and revitalizations as defined by Wallace? Give me one example of each type and explain in what sort of subsistence pattern we might expect to see it.

9. Given a paragraph or two which presents in narrative format some “clues” as to the political, social, kinship, religious, artistic, and/or marital customs of a hypothetical culture, please explain – using anthropological terminology – as many aspects of the culture as possible, and defending your choices as you go. Here is a sample passage: “Bulyagar was excited, for today he would become a man and be allowed to carry a spear. After his circumcision, he would be allowed to marry his father’s sister’s daughters and receive a portion of their inheritance in the form the furs, silks, and gold they had collected over the years. This would enhance not only his position, but that of his entire family. The labor of his wives would also bring great wealth as they tended pigs and raised yams that would enhance Bulyagar’s place in his village and in the surrounding villages. Perhaps, he might even one day achieve the position of Big Man – something he had always dreamed of.”

10. It is nearly impossible to cover everything on a single exam in a unit of this size. I’m sure you have studied much more that did not appear anywhere else on the exam. Please choose a topic NOT covered elsewhere on this exam that you feel you know quite well and explain it to me in as much detail as possible. Your essay will be graded for the complexity of the concept chosen, your ability to explain your understanding of it, and how you explain how your knowledge of that topic will help you at some point in the future or how it has changed the way that you perceive the world right now.