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ANTH 3282 – American Communities

Midterm Synthesis Essay Prompt

Fall 2025

Due Wednesday, October 8 at 11:59pm

Prompt

We opened this semester by asking the question, “What does community really mean, anyway?” For your first synthesis essay, I want you to respond to that question. What is your definition of community? **In your response, you should draw on our course readings and discussions to support your definition and distinguish it from other definitions we have encountered so far. This is a critical part of this paper.**

Then, I want you to reflect on the historical foundations of American community life. Given your definition of community, how have historical events – including government policies – influenced American understandings and experiences of community over time? This could include talking about broad trends like migration (forced Indian removal, European immigration, The Great Migration, suburbanization) or social processes like the social construction of racial and ethnic boundaries between groups. Or you might talk about social movements (Progressive Era and City Beautiful, Settlement House Movement, Civil Rights). Or you could draw on the history of 20th century policies that facilitated the transformation of American cities (urban renewal, suburbanization). These are just suggestions – you are free to draw on any of the material we’ve read and discussed so far in our course. Your goal is to provide at least three examples of historical events that you believe have influenced our experiences of community in the United States today.

Paper Guidelines

Your final essay should be 3-4 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font, and a neutral font like Times New Roman or Calibri.

Because this is a synthesis essay, I am looking for you to synthesize insights and ideas from across our course materials. I am expecting you to draw on at least 5 of our course readings in your paper. When using our course readings, it is important that you use citations. In anthropology courses it is pretty typical to use Chicago author-date style citations with a references page, and I have posted a link to a citation style guide for Chicago for you on Canvas — under Week 1 Materials under the Week 1 Module.

Deadline and Grading

Your paper should be submitted to the appropriate Canvas dropbox by Wednesday, October 8 at 11:59pm — under Assignments: Midterm Synthesis Essay.

This essay is worth 15 points – approximately 15% of your overall course grade.

I will be evaluating your paper based on the thoroughness with which you addressed the assignment prompt, the extent to which you demonstrated your understanding of course materials, the quality of your writing, and whether or not your paper met the guidelines described here (appropriate number of sources, paper length, formatting, etc.).

If you have any questions or concerns, please be sure to reach out to me at bhnrksen@memphis.edu.



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