Course notes

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Social and Cultural Anthropology · SL

IB social and cultural anthropology first assessment 2019

Select one inquiry area from each of three groups at SL; HL adds a fourth and theory extension. Teacher selects real ethnographies; classroom vignettes below are original teaching cases, not ethnographic publications.

SL: unseen-text Paper 1 90 min 40%, ethnography Paper 2 90 min 40%, limited fieldwork 20%. HL: Paper 1 120 min 30%, Paper 2 150 min 45%, fieldwork 25%.

Engaging with anthropology · Concepts, culture and reflexivity

An emic account attends to participants' meanings; an etic account uses analytical categories. Culture is learned and contested, not a fixed list of national traits.

Reflexivity examines how the researcher's position and methods shape knowledge.

> **Checked example**
>
> A participant says taking food creates a duty to help later. An observer initially records only the food exchange.
> The participant's explanation changes the interpretation from an isolated gift to a relationship of reciprocity.

Limits and practice

Do not treat one participant as the voice of an entire community.

Distinguish what was observed, what was said and what you infer before using theory to explain the case.

Which evidence most directly supports an emic interpretation?

Answer: Participants' accounts of what the exchange means to them.

Inquiry groups 1–3 · Reading and comparing ethnographies

Inquiry groups include classification/health/body; belonging/communication/movement; and conflict/development/production.

An ethnographic argument joins particular observations to a conceptual explanation through sustained research.

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■ Checked example

Compare how membership is recognized in each setting: invitations, language or duties may matter differently.
Identify the source, fieldwork setting and method before arguing that one pattern explains both cases.

■ Limits and practice

SL studies one area per group; HL studies a fourth. The map does not replace the teacher's selected ethnographies.

Avoid comparison by loose similarity: explain a relationship and a meaningful contrast supported by specific evidence.

What makes the comparison anthropological rather than a list of similarities?

Answer: Using a concept to explain contextual evidence and differences in social relationships.

Anthropological practice · Ethical fieldwork and analysis

Observation records actions systematically; interviews can explore meanings that actions alone do not reveal.

Consent, withdrawal, confidentiality and the effects of observation shape both ethics and the quality of knowledge.

■ Checked example

Ask how seating relates to existing friendship groups in a consenting club. Record anonymized positions and voluntary explanations.
Compare the first interpretation with a second collection, then reflect on how your membership of the club affected access.

■ Limits and practice

Do not covertly observe sensitive settings or infer friendship from one seat choice.

The school approves the method and retains the actual fieldwork evidence; a simulated worksheet cannot replace IA fieldwork.

Which conclusion fits one short observation?

Answer: It suggests a seating pattern worth investigating further, rather than proving a general rule about friendship.

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