LITERATURE REVIEW AND ESSAY WRITING RESOURCES FOR ANTHRO 101

If you don't like the articles I provided and you want to search for your own, here are two links to help you get started:

ELAC Library: Library Research Using Databases:
https://lor.instructure.com/resources/027234d3831e441cb30b6945c8751f23?shared

ELAC Library: Evaluating Sources:
https://lor.instructure.com/resources/e985e42626854d13977d643c12467b2a?shared

Here is a link to help you with APA formatting:
https://lor.instructure.com/resources/1afe5f2b1e5c411b9144910dac46b3bd?shared

* I've also provided an APA booklet under the Essay Instructions folder for quick reference.

Here is a link to the ELAC Reading & Writing Center where you can schedule an appointment with one of the writing tutors:
http://elacreadingwritingcenter.org/general/services/online-reading-writing-tutoring/

* If you are in one of the sections that has Eddie as an embedded tutor, use the link he provided to schedule an appointment with him.

If you've never written a scientific essay before and need a little bit more guidance, please read the following:

UNDERGRADUATE SCIENTIFIC WRITING GUIDE

(This guide is based on an original document authored by Dr. Roger J. Sullivan of California State University, Sacramento and has been modified by Professor Christine Sepulveda)

Writing papers in biological anthropology courses:

Writing conventions in biological anthropology follow those of formal science writing, and thus differ from requirements in some of the other social sciences or the humanities. Above all, science writing is *objective* rather than subjective. By *objective*, I mean three things:

First, science writing, and the argument that you form in your paper, must be based on objective "facts". By facts, I don't mean absolute truths. A fact in science can be thought of as the best current knowledge about a particular aspect of the natural world (facts may be overturned or modified at any time). A fact in the science literature in effect means an opinion, report or observation that has already been published in the primary literature - a peer reviewed journal or scholarly book. When you are constructing your paper, you must support your argument or ideas with reference to objective "facts" in the literature. In this way, science writing differs from critical writing in other disciplines, say English Literature, where your argument is often based on subjective opinions and impressions rather than objective facts.

Second, science writing is concrete and unambiguous. Whereas non-science critical writing often rewards wit, humor, irony, and subtlety; science writing is a dry enterprise. Because science writing is objective rather than subjective, the priority is to assemble facts into a coherent argument with as little ambiguity as possible. This means using short, simple, sentences and avoiding sub-texts and vagueness in order to make your argument as plain as possible. In contrast to non-science critical writing, you will be penalized for the use of humor, irony, sarcasm, and wit. This is not because science writers have no sense of humor (some may question this) but because humor and emotive criticism usually get in the way of a clear message. Sarcasm is particularly inappropriate in science writing because it is usually used to "dis" opposing perspectives. This is bad for several reasons: (1) opposing perspectives are also based on current knowledge, (2) emotive criticism is often personal, and (3) criticism should be used to challenge arguments rather than the people making them.

Lastly, science (and also your paper) is not about being right or wrong, either in terms of one perspective being "correct" or from a moral point of view. Science is a contest of ideas. At any one time some ideas may be better supported by "facts" than others, but it is usually possible to build formidable arguments for each and every opposing perspective. What I'm getting at here is that you can argue any perspective you like in your paper, as long as it is supported by facts in the literature. At the same time, you are also required to respect arguments opposed to your own perspective. In terms of grading, you don't have to try and figure out which perspective I favor and then tell me what I want to hear. My assessment will be based on how good your argument is, not which perspective you are arguing. However, you will be penalized if you construct your own unsubstantiated argument without supporting references from the literature.

A good paper is an original paper: Your paper must be written in your own words.

As well as being objective, I will also be looking for originality in your papers. By original, I don't mean that you are expected to make a new scientific breakthrough, but to demonstrate that you have read and understood the key literature on the topic and then showed some creativity by adding something extra. This might take the form of:

- finding and incorporating additional sources that add a new perspective or new information to the issue at hand
- offering your opinion in the form of an argument *supported by references* about which side of the issue at hand you think has the most merit

In contrast, an unoriginal paper may adequately review the literature and/or repeat an existing argument while demonstrating little evidence of creativity or critical reflection on the part of the writer. Note that originality *does not* mean telling me how you feel about the literature review. Do not "pad" your paper with irrelevant comments about your emotional reactions to the literature (*e.g.* "*I really liked the Weiss article*…").