

Rutgers University
Department of Anthropology
Fall 2019

History of Anthropological Theory

01:070:311 (3 credits)
Monday, 5:35-8:35pm
HCK-129

Prerequisites: 070:101, or instructor permission

Instructor: Prof. Bridget Purcell
Contact: bridget.purcell@rutgers.edu
Office hours: Monday 2:30-3:30pm, or by appointment
BIO 307 (32 Bishop St.)

“The value of a discipline is precisely in its ability to account for its conditions of existence and thus as to how it arrives at its knowledge practices.”

–Marilyn Strathern, *Commons and Borderlands*

Course Description: This course seeks to understand Anthropology’s “conditions of existence” by revisiting some of its most canonical texts. Beginning with early works of social anthropology, we will trace some of the major continuities and discontinuities in disciplinary thought up to the present. You will gain experience reading and responding to theoretical texts, and you will also learn to place them within relevant contexts—including the history of ideas, the formation of particular schools of thought, national traditions, and contemporaneous political and cultural currents like industrialization and colonialism. Moving back and forth between theoretically- and ethnographically-oriented texts, we will examine theory and empiricism in Anthropology as both mutually entwined and yet in productive tension with one another. For instance, how do the theories that anthropologists bring “to the field” shape what they find there? How, conversely, might the realities that anthropologists encounter during fieldwork unsettle or revise their theoretical lenses? By exploring the history of ideas in Anthropology, students will better understand the discipline’s present-day knowledge practices and their stakes.

This is a reading and writing intensive seminar. It will entail grappling with difficult texts whose language and assumptions are unfamiliar, but do not be discouraged. Taking your time with the readings and weekly responses, even when you doubt your understanding, will ensure that you are well prepared for class discussions and essay assignments.

Please note: This is an internet and laptop-free class. Please turn off or silence all electronic devices before entering the classroom.

Comment [BP1]: Some of my classes try to make anthropological concepts directly relevant to our everyday lives. (Fun classes, like body politics). That’s not really the aim in this class. Rather than trying to translate distant concepts to our own languages/lives, we are trying to place ourselves intellectually in the world of these texts. That requires patience and discipline. I’m not trying to scare you or discourage you – but I do want you to have a realistic grasp of what the semester will be like, so you can decide if it’s for you. What I can almost promise is that by the end of the course, you will be a better reader and writer and thinker.

Assignments and Grading: The success of this seminar relies on your commitment to complete all required readings, to participate actively in class discussions, and to creatively engage with course concepts in your response papers and essays. Grading will be based on:

- **Attendance and Participation (15%):** Your wakeful, engaged presence is required at each class. You should arrive prepared to discuss your understanding of the readings, to articulate the author's key arguments, and to pose questions on points of particular interest or confusion. Please note that I take attendance and participation very seriously; any unexcused absence will affect your participation grade.
- **Weekly Reading Responses (15%):** Each week that you are not leading discussion, you are expected to post a 1-2 paragraph response to the readings on the course discussion board, 24 hours before the class meets (so, by 5:35pm each Sunday). These responses will help you process course reading (and will help you write your papers!). In your postings, you may speak to the author's argument, point to emerging themes across weekly readings, or raise questions you want to discuss further in class. Be sure to read the postings of your classmates prior to class. *Note: late submissions will not be accepted.*
- **Presentation / discussion leading (10%)** During the last 5 weeks of class (weeks 10-14), you will present on that week's readings. Your presentation should review the main points of the assigned book or articles, pose questions on points of particular interest or confusion, and engage the class in a lively conversation. You should plan to speak for approximately 10-15 minutes, with an additional 10-15 dedicated to class discussion.
- **Essays (60% cumulatively):** Throughout the semester, you will write 3 essays, of increasing length and point value. Each essay will critically compare three texts of your choosing from the preceding unit.
 - **Essay 1 (4-6 pages, 15%)** will discuss three texts of your choosing from unit one. Due via electronic submission Friday 10/11 at 11:59pm.
 - **Essay 2 (5-7 pages, 20%)** will discuss three texts of your choosing from unit two. Due via electronic submission Friday 11/8 at 11:59pm.
 - **Essay 3 (6-8 pages, 25%)** will discuss three texts of your choosing from unit three. Due via electronic submission Friday 12/13 at 11:59pm.

**UNIT I:
PRIMITIVISM AND THE PROBLEM OF DIFFERENCE**

Week 1 (9/9)
Introduction and Overview

Weber, Max. 1904. "Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy." Excerpts.

Week 2 (9/16)
Cultural Evolutionism and its Critics

Tylor, E.B. 1920. "The Science of Culture" in *Primitive Culture*. J. Murray, pp. 1-25.

Boas, Franz, 1904. "The History of Anthropology," "The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology," and "On Alternating Sounds." (Selections on Sakai).

Recommended:

Moore, Jerry. 1997. Edward Tylor: The Evolution of Culture." In *Visions of Culture*, pp. 5-17.

Baker, Lee. 2010. "The Cult of Franz Boas and his 'Conspiracy' to Destroy the White Race." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 154(1), pp. 8-18

Week 3 (9/23)
Relativism and Historical Particularism

Benedict, Ruth. 1934. "Introduction," "The Integration of Culture," and "The Individual and the Pattern of Culture." In *Patterns of Culture: An Analysis of Our Social Structure as Related to Primitive Civilizations*. pp. 1-5, 41-51, 232-257.

Kroeber, Alfred. 1923. "What Anthropology is About." In *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*, pp. 131-140.

Kroeber, Theodora. 1961. "Ishi in Two Worlds: A Biography of the Last Wild Indian in North America." In *Violence in War and Peace* (2003) (Eds Nancy Scheper Hughes and Philippe Bourgois). Blackwell, pp. 54-60.

Week 4 (9/30)
What is the Social?

Durkheim, Emile. 1895. "What is a Social Fact?" in *The Rules of Sociological Method*. The Free Press, pp. 1-13.

Durkheim, Emile. 1912 [1995]. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Free Press, Selections.

Mauss, Marcel. 1935. "Techniques of the Body." *Economy and Society*. 2(1), pp. 70-88.

Week 5 (10/7):
Structural-Functionalism and British Social Anthropology

Radcliffe-Brown, A.R. 1940. "Preface" in *African Political Systems*, Eds. Meyer Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard. Oxford University Press pp. xi-xxiii.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1940. "The Nuer of the Southern Sudan." In *African Political Systems*. pp. 272-296.

****Paper 1 due this Friday 10/11 at 5pm****

**UNIT II:
COLONIALISM AND THE PROBLEM OF POWER**

Week 6 (10/14)
Karl Marx and History

Marx, Karl. From *Karl Marx: A Reader*. Ed. Jon Elster. Cambridge University Press, 1986. Selections.

Asad, Talal. 1973. "Introduction" in *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*. pp. 9-19.

Wolf, Eric. 1982. *Europe and the People Without History*. University of California Press, pp. 40-49.

Week 7 (10/21)
Bourdieu and Temporality

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1980. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford University Press. Selections.

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Abdelmalek Sayad. 1964. "Colonial Rule and Cultural *Sabir*." *Ethnography* 5(4), pp. 445-486.

Silverstein, Paul, and Jane E. Goodman. 2009. *Bourdieu in Algeria: Colonial Politics, Ethnographic Practices, Theoretical Developments*. Selections.

Recommended:

Honneth, Axel, Hermann Kocyba and Bernd Schwibs. 1986. "The Struggle for Symbolic Order: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu." *Theory, Culture, and Society* 3(3), pp. 35-51. (see especially part 2, "The Turn Towards Ethnology.")

Week 8 (10/28)
Foucault and The Crisis of Representation

Foucault, Michel. 1980 (2001). "Truth and Power." In *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*, Eds. P. Erickson and L. Murphy, Broadview Press, pp. 514-532.

Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. Vintage. Selections.

Lewis, Diane. 1973. "Anthropology and Colonialism." *Current Anthropology* 14(5), pp. 581-591.

Tuhiwai-Smith, Linda. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books. pp. 58-77.

Week 9 (11/4)
Reflexivity and the Ethnographic Encounter

Devereux, George. 1967. "Elicited Counter-transference: The Complementary Role." In *From Anxiety to Method in the Behavioral Sciences*. 234-252.

Bashkow, Ira. 2006. "The Cultural Construction of Whitemen" in *The Meaning of Whitemen: Race and Modernity in the Orokaiva Cultural World*. University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-25.

Borneman, John, and Abdellah Hammoudi. 2009. "Being There: The Fieldwork Encounter, Experience, and the Making of Truth." In *Being There*, pp. 1-20.

Recommended:

Ginsburg, Faye. 1995. "Parallax Effect: The Impact of Aboriginal Media on Ethnographic Film." *Visual Anthropology Review* 11(2), pp. 64-76.

Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. "After Objectivism." In *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Beacon Press, pp. 46-62.

****Paper 2 due this Friday 11/8 at 5pm****

UNIT III: PRESENT-DAY ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE PROBLEM OF PARADIGMS

Week 10 (11/11) Practice, Resistance, and Neo-Marxism

Dirks, Nicholas B., Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner. 1993. "Introduction." In *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*. pp. 3-45.

Williams, Raymond. 1977. "Base and Superstructure" and "Hegemony." In *Marxism and Literature*. pp. 75-82, 108-114.

Willis, Paul. 1978. *Learning to Labor: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. Routledge, Chapters 1, 2, 4, and pp. 119-126.

Week 11 (11/18) Injustice and Engaged Anthropology

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1995. "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology." *Current Anthropology* 36(3), pp. 409-420.

DeLeon, Jason. 2015. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. University of California Press. Selections.

Farmer, Paul. 2009. "On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below" *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 3(1), pp. 11-28.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. 2002. "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and its Others." *American Anthropologist* 104(3), pp. 783-790.

Week 12 (11/25):
Suffering and Empathic Ethnography

Biehl, João. 2005. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. University of California Press, Selections.

Garcia, Angela. 2008. "The Elegiac Addict: History, Chronicity, and the Melancholic Subject." *Cultural Anthropology* 23(4), pp. 718-746.

Robbins, Joel. 2013. "Beyond the Suffering Subject: Toward an Anthropology of the Good." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19(3), pp. 447-462.

Week 13 (12/2)
Ethnographic Refusal

Simpson, Audra. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Duke University Press. Selections.

Sojoyner, Damien. 2017. "Another Life is Possible: Black Fugitivity and Enclosed Spaces." *Cultural Anthropology* 32(4), pp. 514-536.

Week 14 (12/9)
Ontologies and New Materialisms

Kohn, Eduardo. 2015. "Anthropology of Ontologies." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44, pp. 11-27.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 2004. "Exchanging Perspectives: The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies." *Common Knowledge* 10(3), pp. 463-484.

de la Cadena, Marisol. 2015. *Earthbeings: Ecologies of Practice Across Andean Worlds*. Duke University Press. Selections.

Recommended:

Heywood, Paolo. 2017. "The Ontological Turn." *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. Eds. F. Stein, S. Lazar, M. Candea, H. Diemberger, J. Robbins, A. Sanchez & R. Stasch. pp. 1-12.

Bessire, Lucas. 2014. "The Rise of Indigenous Hypermarginality: Native Culture as Neoliberal Politics of Life." *Current Anthropology* 55(3), pp. 276-288.

****Paper 3 due this Friday 12/13 at 5pm****

Appendix A Learning Goals

Course specific learning goals:

- To gain familiarity with major historical developments in anthropological theory such as evolutionary thought, historical particularism, functionalism, interpretivism, post-modern and post-colonial critiques, as well as contemporary conversations including ontology and ethnographic refusal.
- To relate influential thinkers to their historical and intellectual milieu and understand their impact upon anthropological thought in the past and the present.
- To employ analytical skills when evaluating key theoretical perspectives within anthropology, such as the tensions between universalism and particularism, objectivity and subjectivity, self and other.
- To develop skills to speak and write persuasively about anthropology through engagement with its central theoretical and methodological formations.

Departmental learning goals:

- Identify, explain, and historically contextualize the primary objectives, fundamental concepts, modes of analysis, and central questions in the major field and demonstrate proficiency in the use of this knowledge.
- Demonstrate proficiency in the use of critical thinking skills.
- Express knowledge and proficiency in speaking and writing about central issues in the major field.

Appendix B Additional Course Policies

Absence reporting: If you should need to miss class for any reason, submit an absence report indicating the date and reason at <http://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra>. You should do this prior to the class meeting, or on the day of the absence, at the latest. This is a courtesy that facilitates communication with your instructors, but it does not excuse the absence. In very limited circumstances (religious observance, serious illness, certain athletic events), your absence may be formally excused, given appropriate documentation.

Academic Integrity: I take this very seriously. Any violation of University principles of academic integrity will result in immediate referral to the university disciplinary committee. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with these principles and policies, which are detailed at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.

Accommodations: Students seeking accommodations should consult the Office of Disability Services at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu>, dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu, or (848) 445-6800. Requests for accommodations must be submitted before tests or assignments. Students who suspect they may have an undiagnosed learning disability or other disability may visit the Office of Disability Services for assessment and guidance.