Rutgers University
Department of Anthropology
Fall 2018

Politics of Culture

070:371 (3 credits)
W 3:55-6:55pm
RAB 204

Instructor: Prof. Bridget Purcell
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> "Do not use thought to ground a political practice in Truth; nor political action to discredit, as mere speculation, a line of thought. Use political practice as an intensifier of thought, and analysis as a multiplier of the forms and domains for the intervention of political action" - Michel Foucault, *Preface to Anti-Oedipus*

Course Description: How do anthropologists locate "the political" and study it ethnographically? How does ethnography inform and expand our understanding of politics? How might anthropology generate political critique and collective action? Throughout this course, we will delve into anthropological approaches to power, authority, and domination; statecraft and transnational governance; everyday forms of resistance and collective action; and violence and disorder, among other themes. We will investigate the ways anthropologists have worked to unsettle taken-for-granted concepts and categories–including the state, democracy, and citizenship–as we examine both "formal" institutions and the politics of the everyday.

In the first part of the course, we will consider classic anthropological concerns with politics in small-scale, tribal, and non-state societies. In part two, we will trace anthropology's growing concern with the role of the state and the West in the development of world politics, especially by way of colonialism and global capitalism. In the third and final section, we will explore politics in the post-9/11 era, including challenges to the state form posed by social movements, economic crises, and military interventions. Central to the course is learning what insights ethnographically-rooted and historically-informed research can offer into global processes and macro-level transformations.

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 and themes in your presentations, papers, and responses. Grading will be based on:

- **Attendance and Participation (20%)**: Your lively and thoughtful participation in class is both encouraged and expected. Participation is measured *throughout the semester* by:
  1) Your attendance. Please note that I take this very seriously; any absence that is not formally excused will impact your grade.
  2) Contributions to discussion: You should come to class 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.
  3) Weekly reading responses: Each week that you are not presenting, you are expected to post a 1-2 paragraph response to the readings on the course discussion board, the day before the class meets (so, by midnight each Tuesday). In your reaction 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.

- **Oral presentation (15%)**: Once during the semester, you will present on that week's readings. Your presentation should review the main points of the book or articles, and incorporate your classmates' weekly reaction postings into discussion questions for further conversation. This is also a good place to bring in contemporary events, news items, actions, etc.

- **Three essays (in total, 65%)**: These essays are opportunities for you to synthesize various course readings and themes, and to demonstrate your original thinking and evolving questions. Prior to each assignment, I will distribute a handout with sample essay topics to help you focus your thinking. You are most welcome to visit me during office hours (or make an appointment) to discuss ideas for the essay ahead of time.
  - Essay 1 (5-7p, 15%) is due in hard copy in class Week 4, 9/26
  - Essay 2 (5-7p, 20%) is due in hard copy in class Week 8, 10/24
  - Essay 3 (7-9p, 30%) is due in hard copy in class Week 15, 12/12

Course Materials: I provide all course readings as PDFs on Sakai. Because we will be reading significant portions of the following books, you might prefer to order them:

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities*. Verso Books.

Bourgois, Philippe and Jeff Schoenberg. 2009. *Righteous Dopefiend.* University of California Press.

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

Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 2012. *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity*. Duke University Press.

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2012. *Declaration*. Agro-Navis.
(Note: This title is also available as a $1 e-book).

Scott, James C. 1999. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press.

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

Week 1, 9/5
Anthropology and the Other(wise)

Diamond, Jared. 1997. "From Egalitarianism to Kleptocracy" (Ch. 14) in *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. W.W. Norton, 1997. pp. 265-292.

Boas, Franz. 1904. "The History of Anthropology." *Science* 20(512), pp. 513-524.

Week 2, 9/12
Order and Conflict in Non-state Societies

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. "The Nuer of the Southern Sudan." African Political Systems. pp. 272-296.

Clastres, Pierre. 1967. "Society Against the State" (Ch. 11) in Society Against the State. Urizen Books, 1977, pp. 189-218.

Week 3, 9/19
Anthropology of Politics / Politics of Anthropology

Asad, Talal. "Introduction" and "Two European Images of Non-European Rule" in *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*. Ed. Talal Asad. 1973. pp 9-19; 103-118.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "Structures, *habitus*, practices," "Belief and the body," and (optionally) "The Logic of Practice" in *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford University Press, 1980. pp. 52-79 (80-97).

Bourdieu, Pierre, and Abdelmalek Sayad. 1964 [2004]. "Colonial Rule and Cultural Sabir." *Ethnography* 5(4), pp. 445-486.

Week 4, 9/26
Language, Power, Legibility

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities*. Chapters 1-3. Verso, pp. 1-46.

Scott, James C. 1999. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press. Selections.

Recommended:

Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1974. "A Writing Lesson." In *Tristes Tropiques*. Penguin Books, pp. 331-343.

Week 5, 10/3
Weapons of the Weak:
Jokes, Gossip, Open Secrets

Scott, James C. "Domination, Acting, and Fantasy" (Ch. 2) in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. Yale University Press, 1990. pp. 17-44.

Wedeen, Lisa. "Believing in Spectacles" (Ch. 1) and "Signs of Transgression" (Ch. 4) in *Ambiguities of Domination*. University of Chicago Press, 1999. pp. 1-31; 87-142.

Lakoff, Robin. "Talking Like a Lady" in *Language and Woman's Place*. Oxford University Press, 1975. pp. 8-19.

Wolf, Naomi. "Young women, give up the vocal fry and reclaim your strong female voice." *The Guardian*. July 24, 2015.

Cameron, Deborah. "How to Write a Bullshit Article about Women's Language" and "A Response to Naomi Wolf." *Language: A Feminist Guide* (blog). August 3, 2015.

Week 6, 10/10
Memory, Haunting, Affect

Navaro-Yashin, Yael. 2012. *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity*. Duke University Press. Introduction (1-17, 27-33 only); and Chapters 1-4 (through page 96).

Pearson, Heath. "The Prickly Skin of White Supremacy: Race in the 'Real America.'" *Transforming Anthropology* 24(1), pp. 43-58.

Week 7, 10/17
Margins of the State:
Race, Community, Violence

Foucault, Michel. 1976. *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France*. pp. 239-263.

Bourgois, Philippe and Jeff Schoenberg. 2009. *Righteous Dopefiend:* Intro, Ch. 1, Ch 3, Conclusion. University of California Press. pp. 1-46; 79-115; 297-320.

Week 8, 10/24
States of Exception

In class film and discussion. Essay 2 due in class.

Week 9, 10/31
Politics in an Age of Intervention:
A New Universalism?

Fassin, Didier and Mariella Pandolfi. 2010. "Military and Humanitarian Government in the Age of Intervention" in *Contemporary States of Emergency.* Zone Books. pp. 9-25.

MacLeish, Kenneth T. 2013. *Making War at Fort Hood: Life and Uncertainty in a Military Community*. Princeton University Press. pp. 27-92.

Week 10, 11/7
Mobility, Migration, Capital

Brown, Wendy. 2014. "Waning Sovereignty, Walled Democracy." *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. MIT Press. pp. 7-43.

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

Week 11, 11/14
Pluralism and the Politics of Recognition

Hale, Charles R. 2002. "Does Multiculturalism Menace? Governance, Cultural Rights, and the Politics of Identity in Guatemala." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 34, pp. 485-524.

Povinelli, Elizabeth. 1999. "Settler Modernity and the Quest for an Indigenous Tradition." *Public Culture* 11(1), pp. 19-48.

Week 12, 11/21
No class – Happy thanksgiving!

Week 13, 11/28
Refusal

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

Bonilla, Yarimar. 2015. *Non-Sovereign Futures: French Caribbean Politics in the Wake of Disenchantment*. University of Chicago Press. Selections.

Week 14, 12/5
Resistance

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2012. *Declaration*. Agro-Navis. Selections.

Taussig, Michael. 2012. "I'm So Angry I Made a Sign." *Critical Inquiry* 39(1), pp. 56-88.

Week 15, 12/12
Open Endings

Closing discussion – essay 3 due in class.