

ANT370H1S – Introduction to Social Anthropological Theory

Winter 2015, Wednesdays 10-12, LM158

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1 – 3pm, 234 Anthropology Bldg.

This course investigates the major theoretical frameworks and paradigms in the history of socio-cultural anthropological thought. We will examine how fundamental concepts, such as “social organization” or “culture,” came into being, as well as the debates about these concepts. We will also examine what various theorists have said about core concepts such as symbols, gifts and commodities, nature and the environment, personhood, and power. The course tries to strike a happy balance between providing students with a history of anthropological thought while also equipping students with an understanding of different theoretical paradigms.

Course Objectives

- To acquire some “theoretical literacy” – that is, some familiarity with various theoretical approaches, the differences between them, and how theory informs and enables the analytical work of ethnographic research.
- To gain some familiarity with the intellectual history of socio-cultural anthropology – why certain questions were asked at particular historical junctures, who was arguing with whom and why, etc.
- To provide some conceptual scaffolding for fourth year anthropology seminar courses.

Required Reading

Links to journal articles will be posted on the Blackboard/Portal website for the course. Readings that are book chapters will be posted in PDF form on the Blackboard site.

Course Requirements

(1) Paper 1 – 30% (2% off per day late): 6 – 8 pages + bibliography, double-spaced, 1 inch margins, Times New Roman 12 point font. Papers that are not at least 6 full pages will be given a minimum 10 point reduction. Due by 10pm Friday, Feb. 27th

(2) Paper 2 – 30% (2% off per day late): 6 – 8 pages + bibliography, double-spaced, 1 inch margins, Times New Roman 12 point font. Papers that are not at least 6 full pages will be given a minimum 10 point reduction. Due by 10pm Thursday, April 2

(3) Final exam (during exam period) – 40%

Papers should be uploaded to the Learning Portal website. **Please use your last name to title your file – e.g. Wardlow Paper 1.** You may title your paper something more creative – indeed, you probably should – but the file you upload to the Blackboard site should use your last name only.

Marked papers will also be returned via the Blackboard Portal site. **Be sure to download and save your marked paper.**

Academic Integrity

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. Academic integrity is a fundamental value of learning and scholarship at the U of T. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that your U of T degree is valued and respected as a true signifier of your individual academic achievement.

The University of Toronto's [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppjun011995.pdf) (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppjun011995.pdf>) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement or citation.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).
- Submitting, in whole or in part, a paper written by someone else, such as another student who took this course or a similar course.

Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1 – Jan. 7

Introduction and Overview

Week 2 – Jan. 14

Victorian Anthropology, Cultural Evolutionism, and the Boasian Critique of the Comparative Method

Lewis Henry Morgan – “Ethnical Periods” (from Ancient Society, 1877)

Franz Boas – “The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology” (1896)

Week 3 – Jan. 21

Social Cohesion: Structural Functionalism, Collective Effervescence, and the Gift

A. R. Radcliffe-Brown – “On Joking Relationships” (1940)

Emile Durkheim – selected pages from The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (1912)

Marcel Mauss – selected pages from The Gift (1923)

Week 4 – Jan. 28

The Manchester School: Critiques of Social Cohesion and Stasis

Max Gluckman – “The License in Ritual” (1956)

Max Gluckman – “Tribalism in Modern British Central Africa” (1960)

Week 5 – Feb. 4

The “Natural” World: from Cultural Ecology to the Anthropology of the Environment

Leslie White – “Energy and the Evolution of Culture” (1949)

Paige West – “Translation, Value, and Space: Theorizing an Ethnographic and Engaged Environmental Anthropology” (2005)

Week 6 – Feb. 11

Commodities, Commodity Fetishism, Consumption, and the Social Lives of Things

Arjun Appadurai – “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value” (1986)

Carolyn Fisher – “Selling Coffee, or Selling Out?: Evaluating Different Ways to Analyze the Fair-Trade System” (2007)

Feb. 18 READING WEEK

Week 7 – Feb. 25**Symbols and Meaning part 1: Structuralism****Film: “Claude Levi-Strauss by Himself”**

(We will watch this film in class. It is best to do the assigned reading before class, but we won't discuss it until next week)

Claude Levi-Strauss – “The Science of the Concrete” (from The Savage Mind, 1962)

Paper 1 due by 10pm Friday, Feb. 27th**Week 8 – March 4****Symbols and Meaning part 2: Interpretive Anthropology**

Clifford Geertz – “Religion as a Cultural System” (from The Interpretation of Cultures 1973)

Victor Turner – “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*” (from The Forest of Symbols 1967)

Week 9 – March 11**Theories of Power and Inequality part 1 – Political Economy**

Sydney Mintz – Time, Sugar, and Sweetness. In *Food and Culture*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, pp. 91-103. Routledge, New York.

Michael Taussig – “The Genesis of Capitalism amongst a South American Peasantry: Devil's Labor and the Baptism of Money” (1977)

Week 10 – March 18**Theories of Power and Inequality part 2 – Gramsci, Bourdieu, and Foucault**

Loïc Wacquant – “Habitus as Topic and Tool” (2011)

Michel Foucault – “The Subject and Power” (1982)

Week 11 – March 25**From the Anthropology of Emotion to the Anthropology of Affect**

Catherine Lutz – “Emotion, Thought and Estrangement: Emotion as a Cultural Category” (1986)

Christina Schwenkel – “Post/Socialist Affect: Ruination and Reconstruction of the Nation in Urban Vietnam” (2013)

Week 12 – April 1**From Cultural Construction to the Ontological Turn**

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro – “Immanence and Fear: Stranger-events and Subjects in Amazonia” (2012)

Mario Blaser – “Ontological Conflicts and the Stories of Peoples in Spite of Europe: Toward a Conversation on Political Ontology” (2013)

Paper 2 due 10pm, Thursday, April 2

Guidelines for Papers

Both papers require (1) knowledge of the assigned reading, (2) doing a little extra reading (not more than two or three additional articles or book chapters), and (3) exercising a little creativity and research initiative. Thus, each paper is an opportunity to show your knowledge about a theoretical framework and to put it into practice.

Paper 1

Choose one from the following:

- (1) Radcliffe-Brown theorizes the social meaning of laughter and joking, but his explanation of what joking does and who can joke about whom is not the only theory we have. Find another anthropological article about laughter or joking, explicate it for the reader, and show how it resembles or differs from Radcliffe-Brown. (Hint: one possibility would be to look at the journal *Anthropological Forum* 2008, volume 18, issue 3 dedicated to humor and joking. You could use articles in this special issue or find other sources in the articles' bibliographies. In the final part of the paper (~2 pages), pay attention to when you and a group of friends/roommates/family members are laughing about something or teasing somebody. What is your analysis of the motivations, meanings, and social function or socio-cultural "work" that is being accomplished? Whose theoretical paradigm seems most useful to your analysis?

- (2) The articles in our week on cultural ecology and environmental anthropology are interested in something called "nature." Often this thing called "nature" is seen as different from, and as having a particular kind of relationship to, something called "culture." How does each article understand these two terms/concepts and the relationship between them? (NB: the articles might not use precisely the terms "nature" and "culture"; they might instead use terms like environment, biodiversity, society, organizations, etc.). What sort of change do you observe over time in anthropological interests in and understandings of the relationship between nature and culture? Find at least two other articles by a current environmental anthropologist (e.g. Paige West, Jim Igoe, Peter Brosius, Dan Brockington, etc.) and use these to further illustrate and support your argument.

- (3) Choose a "thing" (e.g. second-hand clothing; cut flowers; cell/mobile phones; a particular kind of food, such as cheese or sushi; or an aesthetic product, such as shea butter) and follow its "social life" or "cultural biography." How does the use and meaning of this thing change when it is in different social contexts? Who produces it and who consumes it? How do people use it to make meaning in their lives? Does it shift from being a "gift" to being a "commodity" (or the reverse) over the course of its social life or cultural biography? Be sure to use at least 2 outside articles about your "thing" and **also be sure to use the assigned reading by Appadurai as a kind of theoretical lens for your**

analysis (this doesn't mean you have to adopt his perspective, but try to relate your analysis to his in some way). Before you set your heart on a particular "thing" be sure that there is sufficient literature to support your choice – i.e. do a google scholar search on anthropology + your thing, and skim some of the article abstracts first.