

## FOUNDATIONS OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL THOUGHT

ANTH 2008, Fall 2012  
Professor Sarah Wagner  
W, F 11:10-12:25 pm  
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Office: 301 HAH  
Office Hours: W 1:00-2:30  
F 9:00-10:45



"Anthropology affords me intellectual satisfaction: as a form of history, linking up at opposite ends with world history and my own history, it thus reveals the rationale common to both. In proposing the study of mankind, anthropology frees me from doubt, since it examines those differences and changes in mankind which have a meaning for all men, and excludes those peculiar to a single civilization which dissolve into nothingness under the gaze of the outside observer. Lastly, it appeases that restless and destructive appetite I have already referred to, by ensuring me a virtually inexhaustible supply of material, thanks to the diversity of manners, customs and institutions. It allows me to reconcile my character with my life." - Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*

### **Course Description**

This is a course on the history of anthropological thought from the mid-nineteenth century until the present. It explores how anthropology as a discipline has changed over time—from the construction of its subject matter to the ideas and social theory shaping its inquiry and methods. In tracing the influence of three national traditions (American, British, and French), we will map a genealogy of scholarship across individual anthropologists and schools of research. We will also tie these developments and key figures to wider historical forces (colonialism, industrialization, the rise of capitalism, world wars, nationalism, migration, etc.), examining how anthropological research and knowledge connect to the world outside academia.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

As a result of completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the foundational schools of thought within the discipline of anthropology.
2. Explain key concepts associated with these schools of thought or theoretical models.
3. Outline the trajectory of anthropology's treatment of "culture" and "society," as it relates to different strands of social and political theory.
4. Evaluate an abstract argument for its structure and thesis.
5. Apply the theoretical model learned to a given cultural practice or social group.

## **Course Requirements and Grading Criteria**

Grades are based on the following components:

- Written assignments (20%)
- Participation (10%)
- Midterm exam (30%)
- Final essay (40%)

**In-class written assignments:** There will be several written assignments, including in-class exercises on material covered in the lecture or based on an in-class reading assignment. Please note that there will be no make-up written assignments without official documentation of an excused absence (see below). You are responsible for obtaining from your classmates all material covered during any missed classes.

**Participation:** The class participation grade is based not only on participation in lecture discussions but also on attendance. After three missed classes, the participation grade will be lowered a half grade with each additional absence. Excused absences require official documentation, e.g., a note from your physician. In accordance with university policy, please notify me during the first week of the semester if you will be absent from class on a day (or days) of religious observance.

**Midterm exam:** Covering material from the assigned reading, lectures, films, and class discussion, the midterm exam will consist of definitions, short-answer questions, and essays integrating textual analysis. As with the written assignments, you cannot make up an exam except in the case of an emergency, which, as noted above, requires official documentation.

**Final essay:** The final essay will be a similar to a take-home written exam, responding to a prompt (you will choose one essay question from among several posed). WID students will choose two questions and will be required to write an abstract and include a bibliography with additional sources used. Detailed instructions will be provided before the Thanksgiving break.

## **Course Texts**

Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996)

Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1967)

Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (New York: Penguin, 1992)

Max Weber, *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (CreateSpace, 2010)

Paul Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984)

Recommended: Lee Baker, *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998)

\*\*\* All other readings will be posted in weekly folders on Blackboard. They are marked in the course schedule below with a [B].

## Additional Course Information

**Academic Integrity:** I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: “Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” For the remainder of the code, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>.

### **Support for Students outside the Classroom**

#### *Disability Support Services (DSS)*

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in the Marvin Center, Suite 242, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

#### *University Counseling Center (UCC) 202-994-5300*

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students’ personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include:

- crisis and emergency mental health consultations
  - confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals
- <http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices>



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## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Part One: Anthropology’s origins**

W 8/29 – Introduction: genealogies of thought, and how to read theory


F 8/31 – Evolutionary theory and its anthropological turn

- Jonathan Weiner, Chapter 2, “What Darwin Saw,” p. 17-36 in *Beak of the Finch: A Story of Evolution in Our Time* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1994). [B]
-  Charles Darwin, excerpts from Chapter IV, “Circumstances favorable to natural selection,” p. 101-109 and “Summary of the chapter,” p. 126-130 in *On the Origins of Species* (1859); the original text can be found at: <http://darwin-online.org.uk/> [B]
-  Herbert Spencer: “Progress: Its Law and Causes,” *The Westminster Review*, Vol 67 (April 1857), p. 445-447, 451, 454-456, 464-65. The excerpts can be found at: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/spencer-darwin.asp> [B]

W 9/5 – Victorian anthropology’s object of study

- George Stocking, Chapter Three, “Travelers and Savages: The Data of Victorian Ethnology,” p. 78-109 in *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: The Free Press, 1987). [B]
- E. B. Tylor, Chapter I, “The Science of Culture,” p. 1-25 in *Primitive Culture* (1871) (G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1920). [B]


F 9/7 – European fascination with the exotic other

 **Film:** *Life and Times of Sara Baartman: "The Hottentot Venus"* (53 min).

\* **ALL: written exercise on reading theory**

W 9/12 – The “science” of measuring and mapping difference

- Stephen Jay Gould, “Introduction” and “American Polygeny and Craniometry before Darwin,” p. 51-104 in *The Mismeasure of Man*.

 Nicolas Wade, “Scientists Measure the Accuracy of a Racism Claim,” *New York Times*, June 13, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/14/science/14skull.html> [B]

F 9/14 – Anthropology goes public: turn-of-the-century construction of difference

- Lee Baker, “Ascension of Anthropology as Social Darwin” and “Anthropology in American Popular Culture,” p. 26-80 in *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954*. [B]

 Image Archive on the American Eugenics Movement: <http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/eugenics/> [B]

\* **WID students: written exercise on the archive**

### **Part Two: The emergence of the culture concept in American anthropology**

W 9/19 – Boas’ critique of cultural evolutionism and the question of relativism

- Franz Boas, “The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology” (1896), p. 270-280 in *Race, Language, and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). [B]
- Rudyard Kipling, “White Man’s Burden” [B]

F 9/21 – American expansionism and the triumph of man over nature: the American Museum of Natural History

- Donna Haraway, “Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936.” *Social Text*, No. 11 (Winter, 1984-1985) p. 20-64. [B]

W 9/26 – Mead’s study of Samoan adolescence

- Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), Chapters I, VI, VII, and Appendix II (New York: Perennial Classics, 2001). [B]

F 9/28 – Mead continued

 **Film:** *Margaret Mead: An Observer Observed* (83 min).

### **Part Three: Functionalist anthropology from across the pond**

W 10/3 – Preface: Durkheim and the study of society

- Emile Durkheim, “What is a Social Fact?” p. 1-13 in *The Rules of the Sociological Method*. Ed. by Steven Lukes; trans. by W.D. Halls (New York: Free Press, 1982). [B]

F 10/5 - Malinowski: Method and theory

- Bronislaw Malinowski, “Introduction,” p. 1-25 and “Essentials of the Kula,” p. 81-104 in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922) (Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1984). [B]
- Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, p. 80-89; 155-158 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967). [B]

W 10/10 – *Do ut des*: the social bonds of reciprocity

- Mary Douglas, “Forward,” p. vii-xviii in *The Gift* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1967).
- Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*.

F 10/12 – **Midterm exam**

W 10/17 – Radcliffe-Brown and the concept of structure

- Radcliffe-Brown, “Introduction,” p. 15-31 in *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (1924). (New York: Free Press, 1952). **[B]**

F 10/19 – Structural functionalism: Evans-Pritchard’s segmentary lineage system

- Thomas Hobbes, Chapter XIII “Of the Natural Condition of Mankind, as concerning their Felicity and Misery,” p. 183-189 in *Leviathan* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982 reprint). **[B]**
- E. E. Evans-Pritchard, “Time and Space” in *The Nuer*, (1940) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963). **[B]**

W 10/24 – EP continued

- E. E. Evans-Pritchard, “Political Organization,” in *The Nuer*. **[B]**

#### **Part Four: The problem of mind and meaning**

F 10/26 – Weber and the historical force of ideas

- Max Weber, *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Part I (Chapters 1-3)

W 10/31 – Weber continued, *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

**\* ALL: written exercise on Weber**

F 11/2 – Interpretive or symbolic anthropology

- Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward and Interpretive Theory of Culture,” p. 3-30 and “‘Deep Play:’ Notes on a Balinese Cockfight,” p. 412-442 in *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973). **[B]**

W 11/7 – Lévi-Strauss and structuralist theory

- Claude Lévi-Strauss, “Setting Out,” p. 17-21; “Writing Lesson,” p. 294-304; and “Little Glass of Rum,” p. 383-393 in *Tristes Tropiques* (New York: Atheneum, 1974).

**\* WID students: written exercise on *Tristes Tropiques***

F 11/9 – Lévi-Strauss continued

- Claude Lévi-Strauss, “Nature and Culture,” “The Problem of Incest,” and “The Universe of Rules,” p. 3-41 in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969). **[B]**

#### **Part Five: A glimpse of anthropology deconstructed; critical theory applied**

W 11/14 – Gender and culture examined

- Sherry Ortner, “Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?” p. 68-87 in M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere (eds), *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974). **[B]**

F 11/16 – Marx and Marxist critiques

- Karl Marx, Part IV, Chapter XV, “Machinery and Modern Industry,” p. 403-419 from *Capital, Volume One*, in *The Marx Engels Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978). **[B]**

W 11/21 – Modes of production

- Eric Wolf, “Introduction,” p. 3-23 and “Modes of Production,” p. 73-100 in *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). **[B]**

F 11/23 – Power/knowledge/subjectivity - the contributions of Michel Foucault

- Paul Rabinow, “Introduction,” p. 3-27 in *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984). **[B]**
- Michel Foucault, “Panopticism,” p. 206-213 in *The Foucault Reader*. **[B]**  
**\*ALL: in-class written exercise on Foucault**

W 11/28 – No class (Thanksgiving)

F 11/30 – No class (Thanksgiving)

W 12/5 – Foucault and the concept of biopower

- Michel Foucault, “The Right to Death and the Power over Life,” p. 258-272 and “The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century,” p. 273-298 in *The Foucault Reader*. **[B]**

F 12/7 – Final reflections and review

**Final essay instructions handed out; the essay is due on the day of the final exam (TBA).**