Anthropology of Security

Fall 2013

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Course Description: This course is anthropological investigation of security, broadly defined. In seeking to understand the conditions, logics, and experiences of a global security milieu, we will explore the relationship between security and insecurity, examining topics such as: policing, prisons, colonialism, insurgency, counter-insurgency, and torture. Security is crucially connected to governance and we will consider these connections. It is equally connected to political possibility and community organization, and we will examine these relations as well. In looking at security through an anthropological lens, we will give particular attention to the experiences of living in and with a security system for the variety of actors that participate in it.

Required Texts:
The following texts are available for purchase at the GWU bookstore and are on reserve at Gelman library:

Additional required readings are available through electronic reserves on blackboard.
Learning Goals:
• To understand how anthropology and related disciplines approach the study of security and policing
• To recognize and evaluate the ways security practices shape societies and human subjects
• To critically analyze scholarly debates about these practices
• To conduct independent research and writing that explores these questions

Course Requirements:

Attendance and Participation: This course is a seminar and in order for it to be successful, we all need to come to class having done the readings and prepared to discuss them. Preparation for discussion includes identifying puzzling aspects of the text, highlighting passages for analysis, and raising questions for debate. My expectation is that, barring emergencies, you will attend every class session.

Reading Response: For each class, everyone is required to post – through Blackboard – ½- to 1-page reflection papers. You should also read each other’s postings before class. Responses should be posted by 9 am on the day of class (to accommodate night-owls and still leave enough time for us all to read the postings). These are not formal papers, but rather are an opportunity for you to react to and reflect on the readings for the week. Raise questions the readings posed for you, think about how they relate to other things we have read, consider how they fit into the course as a whole. These postings are intended to help you in organizing your thoughts about the readings and to create a space for dialogue outside the classroom.

Presentation and Leading Discussion: Starting with the week of October 8, each week a student will be responsible for presenting the reading to the class and for helping to lead class discussions. These presentations should be brief – 10-15 minutes. In addition to discussing the readings, presenters should comment on the postings (noting themes in the responses, interesting questions raised). The presentations are not meant to be the final word on anything, but rather to open up class discussion on the texts.

Seminar Paper and Paper Preparation: The seminar paper is something you should be thinking about and working toward throughout the semester. To this end, you will be required to submit a paper topic and tentative bibliography on October 15 and you will be required to do a presentation on your project on November 26, all before submitting the final paper, which is due December 2. The paper should be 18-20 pages.

Grading:

Attendance: 10%
Participation: 15%
Reading responses: 10%
Presentation and leading discussion: 15%
Seminar paper:* 50%
* includes proposal and presentation
Class Schedule

August 27 - Thinking about Security

September 3 - No class

September 10 - Policing and discipline

September 17 - Colonialism, postcoloniality, and the question of violence

September 24 – Sovereignty and Security

October 1 - Bodies, Citizenship, and Security
Rosalind Morris, “The Mute and the Unspeakable: Political Subjectivity, Violent Crime, and “the Sexual Thing” in a South African Mining Community” in Law and Disorder in the Postcolony

October 8 - Insecurity and the State
October 15 - Living in the Nuclear Age
Joe Masco, The Nuclear Borderlands: The Manhattan Project in Post-Cold War New Mexico

Paper topic and tentative bibliography for seminar paper due

October 22 - Punishment
Lorna Rhodes, Total Confinement: Madness and Reason in the Maximum Security Prison
(University of California Press, 2004).

October 29 - War and Crime
Carolyn Nordstrom, Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the

November 5 - Counterinsurgency
Laleh Khalili, Time in the Shadows: Confinement in Counterinsurgencies (Stanford: Stanford
University Press, 2013)

November 12 - New Security Orders
Paul Amar, The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of
Neoliberalism (Duke University Press, 2013)

November 19 - Work-in-progress
Ilana Feldman, Police Encounters: Security and Surveillance in Gaza under Egyptian rule
(manuscript in progress)

November 26 - presentations