

Anthropology 6102

Fall 2011

PROSEMINAR IN SOCIO-CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Prof. Catherine Allen

2110 G St., Rm. 303

Office hours: Tuesday 1:15-3:15, Wednesday 2:30-4:30, also by appointment

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Course description:

This seminar provides an overview of theory and practice in socio-cultural anthropology. In addition to looking at some classics of the field, we will read more recent work that is indebted to, in conversation with, and sometimes in conflict with these classic approaches. By pairing foundational studies with contemporary ones, we will be able to consider the ways people use theories that may initially seem abstract.

Throughout the course we will consider a set of related questions: 1) What is anthropology's method? That is, how do anthropologists go about seeking information? 2) What is its object? That is, what people, places, and subjects are understood to be the proper objects of study? 3) What are its questions? That is, what are anthropologists trying to understand as they conduct their investigations? What theoretical tools are necessary to conduct these inquiries? We will explore the range of answers that anthropologists have given (and practiced) to each of these questions.

Our aim is to prepare you to recognize and evaluate key theoretical approaches to anthropological research; to critically analyze scholarly debates about theory and method in socio-cultural anthropology; to understand how anthropology defines its method, object, and questions; and to engage in analysis and writing that explores these issues. Finally, you will gain experience in collegial give-and-take at a professional level. My hope is that together we will create a lively and supportive community in which we listen to each other and collaboratively develop new ideas.

The course is also meant to serve as an introduction to the GW Anthropology Department as a creative intellectual community. To this end a number of classes include work by GW faculty members, who will guest lead these sessions.

Required Books:

- Fredrik Barth, Andre Gingrich, Robert Parkin and Sydel Silverman, *One Discipline Four Ways: British, German, French and American Anthropology*. University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss, *Primitive Classification*. University of Chicago Press, 1963[1903]
- E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*. Oxford University Press, 1940.
- Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. Waveland Press, 1984[1922]
- All the other readings for this course are available through electronic reserves on Blackboard. You should print these readings out and bring copies to class.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation: This course is a seminar, and in order to be successful we all need to come to class having done the readings and prepared to discuss them. I expect you to attend every class meeting. Preparation for discussion includes identifying puzzling aspects of the text, highlighting passages for analysis, and raising questions for debate. Joining in class discussion is vital. You will notice that your grade includes a participation component. I know that not everyone has the same level of comfort with joining in class discussion. If this is an area of challenge for you, come and see me early in the semester and we can try and work on some strategies for your involvement. Cellphones and laptops

should be turned off!

Reading Response: For each class, everyone is required to post very short reflection papers (½- to 1-page) through Blackboard. 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.

Each posting should conclude by raising a question or identifying a passage that you would like to discuss in class. Questions can include: I didn't understand what the author meant in this passage, can we spend some time on this; I was intrigued by this idea and would like to explore it further; I saw a connection or contradiction between what this author argues and what another text proposed, I'd like to discuss this further. Whatever you raise as your question or passage you should be prepared to explicate further in class. We probably won't get to every question, but they will provide some guidance for our discussions. If you tend to be shy about jumping into discussion, your question can also give you a way of joining in. You do not need to post for the day you are serving as rapporteur.

Rapporteur: Each week one or two students will be responsible for serving as rapporteur for the class. This responsibility includes preparation in advance of the class, careful attention to the discussion in the first part of the class, and leading a concluding discussion of the week's material. This role will involve making a brief presentation (10 minutes maximum) to start off the concluding discussion. This presentation should reflect both on key themes you identified in reading the week's materials and the lecture and discussion from the first part of class. You should also raise questions for discussion and share in leading the discussion.

Two Critical essays: These 4-5 page papers, due on **October 11** and **November 22**, will give you an opportunity to reflect on the readings and develop some of your thoughts from the online responses. You have considerable freedom in how you approach them, but in any case you should draw on multiple readings to develop your own argument. You may want to take one of our keywords – object, method, questions – as a starting point for beginning your inquiry. Alternatively, you may want to spin off from one or more of your postings.

Panel discussions: You'll participate in a panel discussion of selections from either *Nuer Dilemmas* by Sharon Hutchinson, or *Women of Value, Men of Renown* and *Inalienable Possessions* by Annette Weiner. This assignment is described in a separate handout.

Final take-home exam: If you are an Anthropology M.A. student, this will serve as your “qualifying exam” in socio-cultural anthropology. The exam will be graded by myself and at least one other faculty member. The final will be available on December 7 and is due on **December 14**.

Grading:

Attendance and participation:	15%
Reading responses:	11%
Rapporteur :	15%
Critical Essays:	24% (each essay is 12%)
Final Exam:	<u>35%</u>
	100%

WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS

Some dates and assignments are tentative; any changes will be posted on Blackboard.

* indicates GW faculty

Week 1 August 30

- Claudia Roth Pierpont, “The Measure of America: how a rebel anthropologist waged war on racism” *The New Yorker*, March 8, 2004, pp. 48-63.

Week 2 Sept 6

- Durkheim and Mauss: *Primitive classification*
- Griaule, *Conversations with Ogetemeli*, pp.11-29 (Days One, Two and Three)
- *One Discipline Four Ways*, pp.170-207 (on French Anthropology; pp.167-169 recommended)

Week 3 Sept. 13

- Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, Intro & Ch.1, pp.3-48
- Franz Boas, “The Limitations of the Comparative Method in Anthropology,” and “The Methods of Ethnology” from *Race, Language and Culture*
- *One Discipline Four Ways*, pp. 4-57 (British); pp.72-96 (German); pp.257-274 (American).

Week 4 Sept. 20

- Finish Malinowski, *Argonauts*

Week 5 Sept. 27

- Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*

Week 6 Oct.4

- Claude Levi-Strauss “The Structural Study of Myth,” in *Structural Anthropology*.
- Richard Grinker, *Houses in the Rain Forest: Ethnicity and Inequality Among Farmers and Foragers in Central Africa*, Ch.3
- *One Discipline Four Ways*, pp.208-237 (French anthro)

Week 7 Oct.11

First essay is due

- Clifford Geertz, “Blurred Genres: The Refiguration of Social Thought” in *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*; and “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures*
- *Joel Kuipers, *Language, Identity and Marginality in Indonesia: The Changing Nature of Ritual Speech on the Island of Sumba*, ch.3
- *One Discipline Four Ways*, pp.275-291 (American)

Week 8 Oct. 18

- Victor Turner, TBA
- Kent Maynard and Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor, “Anthropology at the Edge of Words: Where Poetry and Ethnography Meet” *Anthropology and Humanism* 35, 1 (2010):2-19.
- *Catherine Allen, *The Hold Life Has*, ch.4, Afterword; *Foxboy: Intimacy and Aesthetics in Andean Storytelling*, Beginning, Ch.1 (pp.1-40)
- *One Discipline Four Ways*, pp.322-327 (American)

Week 9 Oct. 25

- Karl Marx, “The German Ideology,” “Wage, Labour and Capital,” and “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof,” in *The Mark-Engels Reader* (R. C. Tucker, Ed.)
- Max Weber, “Class, Status, Party” in *Economy and Society*
- Michel Foucault, TBA

Week 10 Nov. 1

- Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, Ch. 3-4; and “Manet and the Institutionalization of Anomie,” in *The Field of Cultural Production: essays on art and literature*
- *Alex Dent, *River of Tears: Country Music, Memory, and Modernity in Brazil*, Intro. and Ch. 1
- *One Discipline Four Ways*, pp.240-253 (American)

Week 11 Nov. 8

- Sherry Ortner, “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?” in *Women, Culture and Society* (1974); and “So Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?” in *The Politics and Erotics of Culture* (1996).
- Other readings in the Anthropology of Gender TBA
- *One Discipline Four Ways*, pp.292-322 (American)

Week 12 Nov. 15

- Kate Crehan, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* – selections TBA
- Philip Cassell, ed. *The Giddens Reader*, 88-134
- Erving Goffman, TBA
- *Steve Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos: An Anthropology of the Social Condition in War*, pp. 1-25 and 251-330
- *Ilana Feldman, "Difficult Distinctions: Refugee Law, Humanitarian Practice, and Political Identification in Gaza," *Cultural Anthropology* 22(1). February 2006

Week 13 Nov. 22

Second essay is due on Blackboard.

No Class meeting.

Week 14 Nov. 29

Panel Discussions:

- Group I. *Argonauts* revisited: selections from Annette Weiner, *Women of Value, Men of Renown* and *Inalienable Possessions*.
- Group II. *The Nuer* revisited: selections from Sharon Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas* and Jon Holtzman, *Nuer Journeys, Nuer Lives*

Makeup Day Dec.6 (makeup for Nov.22)

- Claude Levi-Strauss, “A Little Glass of Rum” in *Tristes Tropiques*
- *One Discipline Four Ways*, pp.111-136 (German Anthropology during the Nazi Period)
- Other readings TBA

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>

SECURITY

In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.