

ANTH 6102: ProSem: Sociocultural Anthropology (Fall 2016)

Richard Grinker

Thursdays, 11:00AM—1:30PM in HAH 202

My Contact Info: rgrink@gwu.edu, 2110 G Street NW and 501J, 1957 E. Street NW (Elliott School)

My Office Hours: TBA

This seminar is designed as a core course for graduate students in anthropology, graduate students in other fields, and advanced undergraduates who have an interest in social theory and anthropology. The course explores the major scholarly questions and conversations in the history of anthropology in order to inform students' understandings of contemporary texts. Questions include: How do societies cohere or change? What is the relationship between the individual and the society? How do we understand other societies in our language but in their terms? Conversations include debates over determinism (for example, idealism versus materialism), the ontological status of culture, and the role political and economic power in shaping subjectivities. Given our time limitations, we cannot cover every aspect of anthropological theory. As one result, students are encouraged to explore in their papers areas either areas of theoretical interest that we did not discuss, or applications of the theoretical perspectives we did cover to the analysis of contemporary ethnographic writing.

In order to facilitate our discussion, starting with week 2, each Tuesday by 2 PM, each student will have framed and written a well thought out question or comments for discussion related to the week's readings and posted this question on the course Blackboard site under Discussion. Then, by Wednesday at 2 pm, each student will have posted a response to at least one of the questions posted the day earlier. In addition, pairs of students will lead class discussion in each session, and their joint posting will contain a more extensive list of questions and points for discussion.

You will each write two short "response essays," of 3-4 (typed, double-spaced) pages. For each of two weeks of your choosing, write an essay about some of the ideas, claims, arguments, and findings found in the readings. You might explore methods, take issue with claims, or relate the readings to other work with which you are familiar. You should not undertake outside reading or research in order to write these essays. You should support your argument(s) with specific references to the text. The first must be posted on Blackboard by September 21th, the second by October 26th. The third and final paper must be a 10 page double spaced AAA style paper that brings together some aspect of theory that we have discussed in class and some body of data that is presented and analyzed in one or more author's works, or which is original data you have collected and/or repurposed for this analysis. You will post the paper on Blackboard by December 9, 5 pm.

Books Required:

Freud, Sigmund. *Totem and Taboo*
Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. NY: Basic Books.
Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. *Routledge Classics*.
Sahlins, Marshall. *Culture and Practical Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Grading:

Participation	20%
Leadership	10%
Paper 1	20%
Paper 2	20%
Final Paper	30%

Special Needs:

Please let me know right away if you have any special needs with respect to how this course will be conducted. Don't wait to do this. *If you need extra time for exams, you have to register with DSS; please let me know if you need to do this, and don't wait.*

Unit 1
Culture and Evolution

Week 1: Post-Darwinian Anthropology

9/1: *Readings due:*

Stocking, George. "The Dark-Skinned Savage: The Image of Primitive Man in Evolutionary Anthropology."
Stocking, George. "From Physics to Ethnology."
Baker, Lee D. "The Ascension of Anthropology as Social Darwinism."
Question of the week: Should anthropology be a four-field discipline?

Week 2: The Origins of Religion

9/8: *Readings due:*

Tylor, E.B. "Animism."
Freud, Sigmund *Totem and Taboo*
Kroeber, A.L. "Totem and Taboo: An Ethnologic Psychoanalysis"
Kroeber, A.L. "Totem and Taboo In Retrospect."
Question of the week: What was Freud's philosophy of history?

Week 3: Durkheim, Bloch, and French Sociology

9/15: *Reading due:*

Durkheim, Emile. Selections from *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*.
Bloch, Marc. "Vassal Homage," From *Feudal Society* (vol. 1)
Benjamin, Walter. Selection from "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."
Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift*.

Question of the week: What did Durkheim mean when he said that any psychological explanation of a social phenomena will always be false?

Week 4: Weber's Philosophy of Value and Theory of Action

9/22: Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*
Weber, Max. "Basic Sociological Terms."

Question of the week: To what extent was Weber concerned more with function than origin?

Week 5: Marx and the Alimentary Structures of Kinship. Guest: Andrew Zimmerman (History)

9/29: Marx, Karl. 1859. Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.
Marx, Karl. Selection from *Capital*.
Marx, Karl and Friederich Engels. *The Communist Manifesto*.
Taussig, Michael. "The Baptism of Money and the Secret of Capital." From *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*.

Question of the Week: How would a Marxist anthropologist study non-capitalist societies?

Unit 2
Structure and Function

Week 6: Functionalism and Structural-Functionalism

10/6: Radcliffe-Brown. "On Joking Relationships."
Evans-Pritchard, E.E. Selection from *The Nuer*.
Richards, Audrey I. "The Concept of Culture in Malinowski's Work."
Gluckman, Max. "Rituals of Rebellion."

Question of the Week: Aren't all explanations of sociocultural phenomena to some extent functionalist?

Week 7: Structuralism

10/13: Geertz, C. "The Cerebral Savage."
Levi-Strauss, Claude. "The Structural Study of Myth."
Levi-Strauss, Claude. "The Effectiveness of Symbols."
Levi-Strauss, Claude. Selection from *Elementary Forms of Kinship*.
Levi-Strauss, Claude. Selection from *The Savage Mind*. "History and Dialectic."
Question of the Week: What did Levi-Strauss mean when he said "Ethnology is first of all psychology?"

Week 8: Hierarchy

10/20: Dumont, Louis. Selection from *Homo Hierarchicus*.
Appadurai, Arjun. "Is Homo Hierarchicus?"
Nader, Laura. "Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from Studying Up."
Question of the Week: Is Homo Hierarchicus?

Week 9: The Particular and the General. Guest: Dan Schwartz (History)

10/27: Geertz, Clifford. "Thick Description."
Sahlins, Marshall. *Culture and Practical Reason*, Chapters 1-2
Question of the Week: Do different kinds of societies require different kinds of theories?

Week 10: Symbolic Anthropology

- 11/3:** Sahlins, Marshall. *Culture and Practical Reason*, Chapters 3-5
Ortner, S. "On Key Symbols."
Geertz, C. "Religion as a Cultural System."
Question of the Week: How is anthropological theory itself an ideology (in Marx's sense)?

Unit 3
Power and Agency

Week 11: Power, Knowledge and Governmentality

- 11/10:** Selection from Foucault, M. *Discipline and Punish*
Foucault, M. "Governmentality."
Halperin, D. "One Hundred Years of Homosexuality."
Hacking, I. "How Should We Do the History of Statistics?"
Question of the Week: To what extent is the accumulation of knowledge a form of "progress?"

Week 12: Agency, Meaning, and Consciousness

- 11/17:** Geertz, C. "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight"
Giddens, Anthony. "Agency, Structure."
Ortner, Sherry. "Subjectivity and Cultural Critique."
Ortner, Sherry. "Anthropology since the Sixties."
Scott, David. "That Event, This Memory: Notes on the Anthropology of African Diasporas in the New World."
Question of the Week: What did Walter Benjamin mean when he said "To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was'"?

Week 13

- 11/24:** **HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

Week 14: Neoliberalism and Public Policy

- 12/1:** Collier, Stephen J. *Selection from Post-Soviet Social: Neoliberalism, Social modernity, Biopolitics.*
Mitchell, Timothy. "Fixing the Economy."
Mitchell, Timothy. "The Properties of Markets."
Wedel, Janine et al. "Toward an Anthropology of Public Policy."
Lakoff, Andrew. "Preparing for the Next Emergency."
Woolard, Kathryn. "Sentences in the Language Prison: The Rhetorical Structuring of an American Language Policy"
Question of the Week: How do public policies affect social categories and relations of power?

Week 15: Presentations

- 12/8:** No readings