ANTH 6010 (Fall 2016):
Seminar in Anthropological Theory for Research Postgraduates
(Version 3.0)

Prof. Matthew West
Course Location: NAH 401
Course Time: Wednesdays, 6:30 – 9:15 pm
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This course is designed to give research postgraduate students a solid foundation for understanding both the historical beginnings and the breadth of contemporary sociocultural anthropological theory. While the readings are sometimes both long and difficult, they have been carefully curated to give an introduction to a selection of the most important scholars, writings, debates, and theoretical concepts that have shaped the discipline. As future anthropologists (no matter where you practice your anthropology), these readings and this syllabus will serve as stable re-entry points into the larger body of work produced by key scholars of anthropology, those who have built on or preceded them, and those who have debated and critiqued them. In light of each student's own fast-approaching forays into “the field,” the course is designed to introduce students to theory both as a lens through which to view the world (and thus pose new and significant research questions) as well as as a set of useful conceptual tools that will help in recognizing and analyzing what one does “see” in the field.

The first part of the course will focus on five foundational “figures” working in the 19th and early 20th centuries whose theoretical approaches have had an especially lasting impact on the overall shape of the discipline today, even as individual anthropologists may trace their theoretical inclinations back only to one or two of the group. The second half will then concentrate on more recent trends and developments, aiming to provide a perspective on where the discipline has been and, through course discussions and written assignments, where students' research may be taking it next.

As this is a seminar course rather than a lecture, students will be expected to come to class not only having read the assigned readings for that day, but also ready with questions and comments that will facilitate our discussion of the readings. The written assignments which will determine the majority of a student's final grade are designed to continue to facilitate learning in multiple ways: wrestling with new theoretical ideas and concepts in writing, inspiring and extending in-class discussions beyond the classroom, applying theoretical concepts and approaches to contemporary real-world research questions, mapping out personal and theoretical connections among the disciplines key figures, and practicing the critical work of determining for oneself which scholars and which writings are worth a deeper look. Keep an eye on due dates listed! Course grades will be determined as follows:

Active In-Class Participation: 10%
Weekly Reactions and Response (300-500 words each): 10%
4 Short Analytical Papers on Selected Topics (4-5 pages each): 40% (10% each)
Final Paper (~16 pages, due December 11 at midnight): 40%
Notes on Readings and Assignments

Readings should be read by the day they are listed below. Students must also submit their “weekly reactions and response” on the week's readings by noon on the date they will be discussed. Some of the readings also appear with very helpful footnotes in the following extremely useful theory compilations that have been placed on reserve (as well as in other such compilations): McGee, R. Jon and Richard L. Warms. 2000. Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History. Boston: McGraw-Hill. Erickson, Paul A. and Liam D. Murphy. 2006. Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. There are many editions of these books, but even the earliest are good for historical anthropology articles.

We will be reading all or nearly all of the following two books. As such, these will not be available on blackboard. Please acquire your own copy of the Weber book through a bookstore or a library (or read it via the reserve copy in New Asia Library). The Mauss book is available online as well as in hardcopy via Hau Books (Fishpond carries it, I think). Please get the version listed below so that we will be referring to the same page numbers. Both are important works and are a worthwhile addition to your academic bookshelves!


Details on each of the four short analytical papers on selected topics will be handed out in class at least two weeks prior to their due dates. One of these will be a group project aimed at producing and discussing a visual representation of the connections between early anthropologists. The second paper will entail a close look at an important anthropologist—at both the person and their work—with whom we will not be dealing directly in class time. Both of these first papers will be shared with the class as another tool to expand our understanding of the now quite large corpus of anthropological work. The third and fourth papers will be chosen depending on the content and direction of discussions in class. Each paper will be worth 10% of your final grade.

In the final paper, you will discuss your own prospective anthropological field research by contextualizing it within five of the different theoretical approaches to sociocultural anthropology that we have considered over the course of the semester. What advantages and disadvantages do these different theoretical frameworks provide to you? What sorts of questions and data would you need to answer and collect if guided by these perspectives? Which of the five could work together within your work and which are contradictory? How might the results of your research speak back to any of these five theoretical perspectives? This paper will challenge you to integrate what you have learned in the class with your own research, engaging “deeply” or “thickly” both with the theories and theoretical concepts themselves as well as with your own research plans, assumptions, and questions. This paper will account for 40% of your grade. Full details will be provided on October 12.

A Last Note, on Electronic Devices
You are allowed to use electronic devices in class ONLY if you are willing to use them exclusively for the class. That means no social media checking, no email checking, and no
internet browsing etc beyond what is in service of the class. Generally, I have found that computers and mobile devices tend to be much more of a distraction then a help while in class especially since this is a discussion class. As a discussion class, regardless of your way of taking notes, I expect you to have eyes up looking at your colleagues and joining in the conversation for most of the time. Please turn all of your devices to silent mode and put them away so as not to disturb the class! If you do not have the discipline to focus on class instead of on your device, you will be asked to switch them off and will be required to take notes with paper and pen instead.

Note on Plagiarism

Students are required by university policy to submit all papers to VeriGuide (the Chinese University Plagiarism Identification Engine System). This includes non-CUHK students! Be sure to leave enough time for this. The 2 page weekly reactions and response writings also may not include plagiarism (they must be entirely your own work), but do not need to be submitted via VeriGuide. For more information on how to submit papers through VeriGuide, please point your browser to http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/.

Part One: Foundations

Week 1:
September 7: Introduction: What is Anthropology, Theory?

Recommended
Calvino, Italo. 1995. “The Flash.” (to read in class)

****First Short Paper Topic Distributed****

Week 2:
September 14: Franz Boas: Evolution, Race, and Cultural Relativism

Recommended:
See Second Paper Topic for more recommended Post-Boas work!

Week 3:

September 21: Emile Durkheim: Society and Structure: Structural Functionalism


Recommended

****Initial Presentation of Group Visualizations****

Week 4:

September 28: Karl Marx: Capitalism, Materialism, Mystification and Value


Recommended
Week 5:
**October 5: Max Weber: Capitalism's Iron Cage**


**Recommended**

Week 6:
**October 12: Marcel Mauss: The Power of the Gift**


**Recommended**

****Second Short Paper Due****
****Third Short Paper Topic Distributed****
****Final Paper Information Formally Distributed****

Week 7:
**October 19: From Interpretation to Post-Modernism**


**Ndembu Ritual.** Ithaca: Cornell University Press.


**Recommended**


**Week 8:**

**October 26: From Structuralism to Post-Structuralism**


**Recommended**


See also works by Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Walter Benjamin (a pre-post-structuralist), Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, more Michel Foucault (Madness and Civilization/Knowledge are good too), Antonio Gramsci, Julia Kristeva and Jacques Lacan among many others.

**Week 9:**

**November 2: Practice Theory: How we shape the structures that shapes us**


Recommended

Week 10:
November 9: Biology, Bodies, and Culture

Recommended

****Third Short Paper Due****
****Fourth Short Paper Topic Distributed****
Week 11:

November 16: Globalization


**Recommended**


Week 12:

November 23: The Material Turn


**Recommended**


****Fourth Short Paper Due****

Week 13:

November 30: **Who we are, How we’re defined, and the Spaces Between These**


**Recommended**


Week “14”:

December 11

****Final Paper Due****