ANTH 5010
Anthropological Theory
Spring 2016

Seminar: Tuesday 6:30 PM – 9:15 PM, NAH 11
Instructor: Teresa KUAN, NAH 325, tkuan@cuhk.edu.hk, 3-7728
Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM, and by appointment

This course introduces students to the history of anthropological theory. Following some exploration on the terrain of classical social theory, we will begin our travel through time with 19th century evolutionism, ending the semester with the “ontological turn.” The organization of this course is somewhat chronological, which is not meant to suggest a teleological progression, as if the latest theoretical trend is naturally the best. (Granted, some ideas are more problematic than others.) In the course of the semester, you are encouraged to pay attention to enduring anthropological themes in addition to considering how different frameworks enable or foreclose certain perspectives.

Theory is a tool, and the purpose of learning it is to create a toolkit: the more you learn, the more resources you have at your disposal. In the course of this semester, you are encouraged to relate our discussions to contemporary ethnographies you are reading for other classes, to any research project you may be working on, and to general observations of the world around you.

Required Readings

Readings will be posted on Blackboard, but I encourage you to get your own copy of Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory, available at the CU Bookstore.

Resources

The following titles are not required reading, but they may be helpful in clarifying concepts and ideas. They will be on reserve at the New Asia Library:


Tips for reading original texts

The most important thing is to try. Simply “showing up” is a great start. At minimum, you need to do the work moving your eyeballs across sentences and down paragraphs, letting yourself get immersed in a given text.

At another level, it is also very important to read actively. Keeping some questions in mind is helpful: how does the author express him or herself? What are some commonly recurring words and phrases? Where does the author take you through the logical development of an idea, and where does the author make a more definitive point? Are there passages that stand out as especially important or revealing? Does the author offer case examples to illustrate?

Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>March 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>May 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation and attendance</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Midterm paper questions will be posted 1 week before the due date. Final paper questions will be posted 11 days before the due date.

All assignments must be submitted to VeriGuide. Assignments without a signed declaration from VeriGuide will not be graded. Please visit: https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jspx

**

Week 1 (January 10)
Course Introduction

☞ No readings.

Week 2 (January 17)
Marx and Weber: Materialism versus Idealism


Week 3 (January 24)
Durkheim and Mauss: Social Cohesion and Integration

☞ Émile Durkheim, Introduction to The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, in Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory (1915)
Émile Durkheim, “Progressive Preponderance of Organic Solidarity” and “Division of Labor in Society: Consequences,” in *On Morality and Society*

Marcel Mauss, excerpts from *The Gift,* in *Anthropological Theory: An Introductory History* (1925)

---

**January 31**

☞ No class. Happy Chinese New Year!

**Week 5 (February 7)**

*The Birth of Modern Anthropology: How to understand difference?*


- (RE-VISIT) Bronislaw Malinowski, “The Subject, Method and Scope of this Inquiry,” in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922)

**Week 6 (February 14)**

*British Social Anthropology: Or, there is a rational explanation for everything*


**Week 7 (February 21)**

*Culture and Personality (American Cultural Anthropology)*

- Margaret Mead, Introduction to *Coming of Age in Samoa,* in *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory* (1928)

- Ruth Benedict, “The Individual and the Pattern of Culture,” in *Patterns of Culture* (1934)

Week 8 (February 28)

Claude Lévi-Strauss and the Idea of Structure

- Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Making of an Anthropologist” and “Sunset,” in *Tristes Tropiques* (1955)

**MIDTERM PAPER DUE:**

Questions will be posted Friday morning February 24 by 10:00 a.m. Paper is due to the department office on March 3, by 5:00 p.m.

Week 9 (March 7)

**The Materialists: Neo-evolutionism, cultural ecology, and cultural materialism**

- Marvin Harris, “The Cultural Ecology of India’s Sacred Cattle,” in *Anthropological Theory* (1960)

Week 10 (March 14)

**Symbolic Anthropology, Part I: Systems of thought**

- clip from *Witchcraft among the Azande* (André Singer, Granada Television)

Week 11 (March 21)

**Symbolic Anthropology, Part II: Symbols as active force**

- Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture” and “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973)
Week 12 (March 28)
Power and Practice

- Michel Foucault, “Panopticism,” in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975)
- Clip from *Modern Times* (Charlie Chaplin)

April 4

- No class – Ching Ming holiday.

Week 14 (April 11)
“The Erosion of Classic Norms”

- I may be traveling to the Society for Psychological Anthropology conference this week.

Week 15 (April 18)
Rethinking Nature/Culture, Rethink Everything


FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE:

- Questions will be posted Friday morning April 21 by 10:00 a.m. Paper is due to the department office on May 2, by 5:00 p.m.
POLICIES

Participation

Participating in class is extremely important. Asking questions and making comments not only contributes to generating a class discussion, it is also a way of trying out ideas and working through the material for your own sake. Getting comfortable with speaking up in class is important in learning how to think. Us professors are not here to “transmit” ideas to you. We are not here to “pour” content into your brain. We would like for you to go beyond regurgitation of course materials in your written assignments, and learning to contribute to class discussion, learning to integrate multiple perspectives during class discussion, will help you strengthen your independent thinking skills. I fully encourage questions and comments, because your questions and comments will serve both the class as a community, as well as yourself.

Opinions vs. Arguments

There is a difference between opinion and argument. Your personal viewpoints are welcome during class discussion, but your papers will be evaluated based upon your ability to formulate an argument rather than your ability to express an opinion.

An argument is analytical. Arguments propose relationships between variables, and they support assertions being made with empirical evidence – either ethnographic data, or, in the case of studying theory, passages from original texts that illustrate how a particular theorist formulated an idea.

There is also a difference between opinion and perspective. An opinion usually contains some kind of judgment about how the world should or should not operate. A perspective, on the other hand, is a way of looking at the world. In other words, having perspective involves the ability to see patterns and themes, or differences and divergences, which may not be obvious at first glance. Having an opinion is easy. Having the insight that comes with perspective is much harder.

Late Submissions

Papers submitted after the due date will suffer a fraction of a grade deduction for every day it is late. For example, an A- will become a B+, a B will become a B-, et cetera.

Academic Honesty

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on academic honesty, and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on cheating in examinations and plagiarism. Any such offence will lead to disciplinary action including possibly termination of studies at the University. Students should know how to properly use source material and how to avoid plagiarism. Students should read the detailed guidelines and examples for the acknowledgement of sources in the University’s website at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academic honesty. Students are required to submit all papers through VeriGuide, which is also explained at the above website.