This course will introduce economic and political anthropology. For anthropologists, the economy is not numbers and markets, but how cultures produce, distribute, and consume goods. People in different cultures have different ways of making a living, but they are not completely different; what are the patterns and rules? Is it human nature to be selfish and always want more things? Why do some people and countries have more wealth than others? Is poverty natural and inevitable? These are not just matters of economics, but of power. The focuses of this course are twofold. On the one hand, we examine the nature of the economy. On the other hand, this course also addresses the nature of anthropology through the focus on the economy. In the first half of the semester, we will go through key topics in economic anthropology and center our debates and discussions on a key concept: “rational” choice. The second half of the semester will focus more on contemporary economic-related challenges of human societies. Since capitalism is the most widespread and dominant economic system of our time, we will examine a few crucial phenomena/challenges including consumerism, the politics of development and the destruction of the environment, nationalism, and migration that, arguably, are intrinsic to global market capitalism.

Learning Outcomes:
Students taking this course will:

- learn to see the cultural nature of the economy and of power;
- be able to understand how economic behavior that seems irrational in market capitalist contexts can make sense in other cultural contexts;
- learn how to combine universalizing theories and ethnographic understanding of particular cultures;
- understand the way the culture of capitalism shapes the way we see the world and affects our behavior;
- be aware of the history of ecological degradation, consumerism, globalization, nationalism, and labor migration, and see how they are related to each other.

Readings:
This course use various articles and book chapters. However, we will read almost in their entirely of the following two titles. You are strongly encouraged to acquire a copy for your own reference.


Robbins, Richard.

All these readings are available on University Library Reserve. For the chapters and articles we assigned as required readings, a copy will be available in the department of anthropology for your review.

**Short Course Outline:**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<td>Introduction and Overview</td>
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<td>Jan 14</td>
<td>Defining the Economy and Human Nature</td>
<td>Wilk &amp; Cliggett</td>
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<td>Jan 21</td>
<td>Self-Interest and Critiques of Modern Economics</td>
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<td>Jan 28</td>
<td>Social and Political Economy</td>
<td>Wilk &amp; Cliggett, Diamond</td>
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<td>Feb 4</td>
<td>Cultural Economics</td>
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<td>Feb 11</td>
<td>Gifts, Exchange and Complex Economic Human</td>
<td>Wilk &amp; Cliggett</td>
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<td>Feb 18</td>
<td>No Class (CNY Holiday)</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 25</td>
<td>Midterm Exam (in class)</td>
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<td>Mar 4</td>
<td>Consumerism and Affluenza</td>
<td>Robbins</td>
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<td>Mar 11</td>
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<td>Apr 1</td>
<td>Resistance and Rebellion</td>
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<td>Apr 8</td>
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<td>Appadurai, West</td>
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<td>Apr 15</td>
<td>Wrap-up Discussion</td>
<td>Robbins</td>
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**Course Requirements and Evaluation**

Students are expected to read **beforehand** and participate actively in lecture and tutorial discussions.

- Participation and tutorial questions 10%
- Leading Tutorial Discussion and tutorial questions 20%
- Reading Commentary 35%
- Final paper (10 pages) (May 4) 35%
Participation: based on your performance in both lectures and tutorials. You will not be evaluated by the quality of your comments but whether you have prepared for the class (done the reading) and actively participated in the discussion.

Leading tutorial discussion and tutorial questions: In tutorial sessions, we will have 1) discussion of the lecture that day and 2) a short seminar on the ethnographies we are reading together. Students will be divided into groups of 2-3 and be responsible for leading tutorials in turn (10%). Please do not summarize the readings for the class. Rather, share your questions, concerns, and critiques with your class and ask provocative questions to facilitate the dialogue. You are encouraged but not required to use extra materials for the short seminar. Feel free to contact me if you need help for preparing the tutorials. Students who are not leading the tutorials are required to submit 1-2 question(s) or point(s) for discussion with reference to the readings before each tutorial (10%).

Reading Commentary: You can choose from one of the following: 1) Write a critical commentary of one of the ethnographies we read this semester. Your model would be the review essays in the journal Reviews in Anthropology. The commentary should be no more than 8 pages (double-spaced, font size 12 or larger, standard margins) and additional materials (of a particular topic of economic anthropology) should be incorporated for the review. The due date will be one week after we finish reading the title.

Final paper: You will write a paper that examines a problem within the scope of political and economic anthropology using the theories and ideas we have learned from the course. You can use a term paper you are writing for another course and add on the political and economic aspect of analysis or you could choose recent news and critically and anthropologically analyze it. This paper should demonstrate your critical reflections of materials and idea we have in this course. No more than 10 pages (double-spaced, font size 12 or larger, standard margins). Due: May 4.

The university requires all papers to be checked by VeriGuide (https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jspx). Please submit your VeriGuide receipt with signature for final response essay. Fail to do so we result in 0 point for the paper.

Academic Honesty:
You are required to cite properly (guidelines: http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ant/tstyle.doc) and please refer to the university website (http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/index.htm and http://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/english/resource/referencing_avoidingplagiarism1.pdf) to avoid plagiarism.

Course Outline:

WK1 (Jan 7): Introduction and Overview
Syllabus and course overview
No reading this week
No tutorial on Jan. 12 & 13
WK 2 (Jan 14): Defining the Economy and Human Nature

Film/Video 1: Economic Anthropology (30 minutes) UC Video-VHS, GN448 .E36 1983

WK 3 (Jan 21): Self-Interest and Critiques of Modern Economics

WK 4 (Jan 28): Social and Political Economy

Diamond, Jared

WK 5 (Feb 4): Cultural Economics

WK 6 (Feb 11): Gifts, Exchange and Complex Economic Human

WK 7 (Feb 18): No Class (CNY Holiday)
No tutorial on Feb. 23 & 24

WK 8 (Feb 25): Midterm Exam (in class)
No tutorial on Mar.2 & Mar. 3

WK 9 (Mar 4): Consumerism and Affluenza


WK 10 (Mar 11): Population and Migration

Recommended:

**News Article 3:** “Workers on Tap.” *The Economist*, January 3rd, 2015

**WK 11 (Mar 18): Development and Environment**

**Film/Video 2: The Warriors of Qiugang 仇崗衛士:** Ruby Yang, 2010, 39 mins,

**WK 12 (Mar 25): Ethnicity and Nationalism**

**WK 13 (Apr 1): Resistance and Rebellion**

**Recommended:**

**WK 14 (Apr 8): Globalization, Commodity and the Politics of Values**
Appadurai, Arjun.

**Recommended:**
Mintz, Sidney W.

**WK 15 (Apr 15): Wrap-up Discussion**

➢ **Final paper due on May 4.**

**Ethnographies:**
Gates/ China’s Motor: A Thousand Years of Petty Capitalism
Mauss/ The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies
Mintz/ Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History
Yan/ The Flow of Gifts: Reciprocity and Social Networks in a Chinese Villages
Wolf/ Europe and the People without History