

ANTH 3380

Spring 2025

Monday: 3:30 – 5:15 PM (Lecture)

Monday: 5:30 – 6:15 PM (Tutorial 1)

Tuesday: 10:30 – 11:15 AM (Tutorial 2)

Venue: T.C. Cheng Bldg. C4 (Lecture);

T.C. Cheng Bldg 208 (Tutorial 1); T.C. Cheng Bldg 207 (Tutorial 2)

Lecturer: Dr. Tim Rosenkranz

Office: NAH324

Office Hours: By appointment

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TA: TBD

## **ECONOMY, CULTURE AND POWER**

What is the economy? The answer today is mostly markets, choice, investment, and profit. Yet, this seemingly universal definition tells us more about the power of capitalism and contemporary economics than the diverse and complex social relationships that are economy and society, markets and culture, power and domination. This course enables students to understand, go beyond, and critique such narrow visions of the economy through an introduction to economic anthropology. The anthropological perspective on economy focuses on how people in different places produce, circulate, and consume things to make a living. This living is not just a paycheck, it is everything, it is society, family, intimacy, struggle, belonging, love, and alienation.

This course provides an overview of the key concepts and debates of economic anthropology across time and space by focusing on how things circulate in various forms, hold value, how they become gifts or commodities, and how commodification turns labour, land, or money into things. Through these studies, the course offers a critical perspective on the complex and diverse contemporary issues of economy, culture, and power from markets, gifts, data, commodity chains, work, outsourcing, transnational migration, uneven development, to environmental degradation, and neoliberalism.

### **Learning Outcomes:**

Students taking this course will:

- 1) learn to see the cultural nature of the economy and of power;
- 2) be able to understand how economic behavior that seems irrational in market capitalist contexts can make sense in other cultural contexts;
- 3) learn how to combine universalizing theories and ethnographic understanding of particular cultures;

- 4) understand the way the culture of capitalism shapes the way we see the world and affects our behavior;
- 5) be aware of the history of capitalism, consumerism, globalization, neoliberalism, commodification, branding, the changing forms of work and craft, and see how they are related to each other.
- 6) acquire a political and economic perspective to understand human behaviours, cultures, and choices.

### **Readings:**

This course is based on primary texts (articles, book chapters) to access the depth and complexity of economic anthropological thought, theory, and ethnography. All required readings will be available as PDF on blackboard.

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I have included two helpful economic anthropology readers (Hann/Hart + Wilk/Cliggert) in the introduction/first class session. These readers provide an introduction to the field of economic anthropology, but they are not required to be purchased for this course.

### **Course Format:**

This course is conducted in lecture and tutorial format. The lecture will discuss and introduce the required readings, but it will not give a detailed summary of the readings. It is therefore essential that you do the required readings before class and come prepared with questions and comments. There will be no transcript of the lecture provided afterwards, so please take notes. The lecture will be interactive with room for your questions and discussion. The tutorial is an extension of the lecture based on the student's needs and interest. The tutorial is further meant to facilitate questions of clarification of concepts and to engage more in-depth with the specific readings.

You are expected to come to all lectures and tutorials. I strongly encourage you to ask questions and participate in discussion. You are also welcome to post questions on blackboard if you feel uncomfortable in this format. In case you have to miss class, please also e-mail me beforehand. It is your responsibility to obtain notes from your fellow students about the missed sessions.

### **Requirements and Assessment:**

The following are the required assignments that will be graded.

1. **Source Commentary + Participation (10 %):** You are expected to do the readings and come to all lectures and tutorials. I strongly encourage you to ask questions and participate in discussion. You are also welcome to e-mail me questions or comments before or after class.

To help you apply the topics and readings to contemporary problems and issues, you will have to finish **one** source commentary and may be asked to present and discuss them during class. For these assignments you have to find sources that can be understood or investigated through the specific concepts, theories or problems discussed in the readings of that week. You are free in your selection, but please **do not use academic articles or books!** Sources instead could be a newspaper article, 'you-tube' clip, blogpost, movie, advertisement, song, etc. The source you chose has to be in English (or with English subtitles) and made available for all students (online link or PDF). As part of this assignment you will have to write a short accompanying commentary, in which you explain why the source you chose is related to our class and why it is interesting. This commentary should be about 200-300 words. Please post this source commentary on blackboard (in the discussion forum). Please be prepared to present and discuss your idea and thoughts during the lecture or tutorial. You can choose which week to submit the assignment, but **it has to be submitted before the Midterm Exam is handed out (week 8)**. Please note that you will have to submit your own assignment, no group work!

2. **Midterm Paper (40 %):** The Midterm-Exam will consist of one question discussing the readings and lectures of the first half of the course (including week 8). The question will be handed to you in class (8<sup>th</sup> week: Feb 24). The mid-term exam should answer this question in one essay. The total essay length is 1000 – 1200 words (excluding references). The deadline for submission is **Wednesday, March 5<sup>th</sup> by midnight**. The exam needs to be submitted in the assignments on blackboard together with a signed veriguide statement.
3. **Topic-Centered Final Essay (50 %):** This course highlights how political and economic systems have largely shaped our lives – our values, understanding of who we are, and imaginations of human societies. Yet within these powerful systems, such as capitalism and neoliberalism, some diversity, difference, and even alternatives persist and emerge in many forms. Inspired by these focuses, this assignment asks you to write a critical essay of a contemporary issue. You are encouraged to engage with news (from world news to online content), books, films, podcasts, etc. **A short idea outline (less than 300 words) has**

to be posted on blackboard before class on March 10<sup>th</sup>. The final essay should be between 1500 – 2000 words (excluding references). The Final Essay is due on **Sunday, April 28 by midnight**. The essay needs to be submitted in the assignments on blackboard together with a signed veriguide statement

**VeriGuide requirements:** Students are required by university policy to submit all exam papers (except the out-of-class assignments) to VeriGuide

([https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login\\_CUHK.jspx](https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jspx)). An exam (midterm and final) assignment without a signed declaration from VeriGuide will not be graded.

**Use of any generative AI is not allowed in this class and will lead to an F.**

### **Grade Descriptors:**

- A:** Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
- A-:** Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
- B:** Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
- C:** Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
- D:** Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.
- F:** Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

### **Policies and Support:**

- **Educational Technology:** This class relies on the use of Blackboard. All required class readings, the out-of-class assignment submissions, as well as announcements will be done through it. Note that it uses the email address assigned to you by the University, so it is your responsibility to have an electronic mail forwarded to your main email address.
- **Respectful Conduct and Discussion Rules:** We will discuss many interesting and important topics. While I encourage thoughtful, engaged, and controversial discussion, I

expect you to be polite and respectful of your classmates' opinions, limit your statements to academic (not emotional) arguments, and not use offensive language or judgmental statements. Please give each other time to talk, do not interrupt, and most importantly listen to each other.

- **Late Submission:** Late submission will suffer a fraction of a grade per day. For example, an A will become an A-.
- **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism:** Academic honesty is crucial and plagiarism is a serious offense. The university has recently updated its policies on Academic Integrity and the penalties for plagiarism and cheating:  
[http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng\\_htm\\_files\\_%282013-14%29/p06.htm](http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_htm_files_%282013-14%29/p06.htm). You are required to cite properly (guidelines: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/ant/tstyle.doc> and [http://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/english/resource/referencing\\_avoidingplagiarism1.pdf](http://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/english/resource/referencing_avoidingplagiarism1.pdf)) to avoid plagiarism. Please do not hesitate to talk to me and ask questions about this.
- **Technology Use:** While technology is an important tool to aid learning, please be respectful and do not distract yourself and your fellow students. Students are only allowed to use their tablets or laptops in class to take notes. Please do not use your devices for non-class related activities (e-mail, social media, etc.) Mobile phones must be turned on silent (not vibrate) and kept in your bags.
- **Independent Learning Center:** If you need help with communication and learning skills, the University has a great resource for you. You can schedule a consultation or attend workshops on various strategies for improving learning outcomes  
<https://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/EN/mission.aspx>
- **Special Accommodation:** If you need special accommodations or classroom modifications, you need to notify both me and the University's Wellness and Counseling Center (<https://www2.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/disability/en-GB>) no later than the third week of class.

## **Part I: Introduction and Foundations**

### **Week 1 (Jan 6): Introduction and Overview**

#### Recommended Readings:

Hann, Chris and Keith Hart. 2011. “Chapter 1: Introduction” (until p. 15). In: C. Hann and K. Hart. *Economic Anthropology: History, Ethnography, Critique*. Pp. 1- 17. Cambridge: Polity.

Wilk, Richard R., and Lisa Cliggett. 2007. “Chapter 2: Economics and the Problem of Human Nature”. In: R. Wilk and L. Cliggett. *Economies and Cultures: Foundations of Economic Anthropology* (2nd edition). Pp. 31 – 48. Boulder: Westview Press.

### **Week 2 (Jan 13): Gift-Economies**

Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1920. “Kula: The Circulating Exchange of Valuables in the Archipelagoes of Eastern New Guinea”. *Man*, Vol. 20, pp. 97-105.

Rupp, Katherine. 2022. “The calculus of the gift: Money and social relationships in Japan”. In: *Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies (MPIfG), Cologne*, Vol. 23, Issue. 3. Pp. 25-30

### **Week 3 (Jan 20): Gifts and Obligations**

Mauss, Marcel. 2016 [1925]. “The Gift” (Part II: Introduction & Chapter 1). In: M. Mauss. *The Gift: Expanded Edition*. Translated by Jane I. Guyer. Expanded edition. Pp. 55 – 75. Chicago: HAU.

Mears, Ashley: *The Potlatch Revisited: Staging Wealth and Waste*.

<https://asaconsumers.wordpress.com/2017/09/11/consume-this-the-potlatch-revisited-staging-wealth-and-waste/>

### **Week 4 (Jan 27): Markets and Economy**

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2021. “Polanyi Goes to Mauritius: Economy and Society in the Postcolony”. In: Deema Kaneff and Kirsten W. Endres. *Explorations in Economic Anthropology: Key Issues and Critical Reflections*. Pp. 267-277. New York: Berghahn Books.

Polanyi, Karl. 2001 [1944]. Chapters 4 + 6. In: K. Polanyi. *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press.

**+++ Week 5 (Feb 3): No Class because of Lunar New Year Vacation +++**

### **Week 5 (Feb 10): Land and Property**

Carrier, James. 1998. "Property and social relations in Melanesian anthropology". In: C. Hann, ed. *Property Relations*. Pp. 85 – 103. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### **Week 6 (Feb 17): Gentrification**

Ocejo, Richard. 2017. "Introduction: A Stroll through the Market" + "Chapter 1: The Cocktail Renaissance". In: R. Ocejo. *Masters of Craft: Old Jobs in the New Urban Economy*. Pp. 1 – 49. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

### **Week 7 (Feb 24): Labor and Craft**

Chu, Nellie. 2016. "The Emergence of 'Craft' and Migrant Entrepreneurship along the Global Commodity Chains for Fast Fashion in Southern China". *The Journal of Modern Craft* Vol. 9 (2): Pp. 193–213.

*+++ Handing out questions for midterm exam paper (due on Sunday, March 3) +++*

### **Week 9 (March 3): Reading Week no Class**

### **Week 10 (March 10): Data and the Attention Economy**

Gershon, Livia. 2019. We All Work for Facebook. Digital labor is valuable even when we do it for free. Should we get paid? <https://longreads.com/2019/04/26/we-all-work-for-facebook/>

Marwick, Alice. 2015. "Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy". In: *Public Culture* 27(1 75). Pp. 137–160.

*+ post final essay idea on blackboard (less than 300 words)*

### **Week 13 (March 17): Commodification**

Kopytoff, Igor. 1988. "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process". In: A. Appadurai, ed. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in a Cultural Perspective*. Pp. 64-94. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Week 12 (March 24): Money and Social Relationships**

Kwon, June Hee. 2015, "Love and Money in a Korean Chinese Transnational Migration".  
*Cultural Anthropology*. Vol. 30 (3): 477-500.

**Week 13 (March 31): Debt and Credit**

Graeber, David. 2011. "On the Experience of Moral Confusion". In: D. Graeber. *Debt: The First 5000 Years*. Pp. 1 - 19. Brooklyn: Melville House.

**Week 14 (April 7): Commodities and Power**

Cook, Ian. 2004. "Follow the Thing: Papaya," *Antipode* Vol. 36 (4): Pp. 642-64

**Week 15 (April 14): Commodities, Environment, and the Anthropocene**

Tsing, Anna. 2015. "Enabling Entanglement", "Prologue" + "Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5". In: A. Tsing.  
*The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. Pp. vii – 44,  
pp. 73 – 84. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

+++ Final Essay due Sunday, April 28 +++